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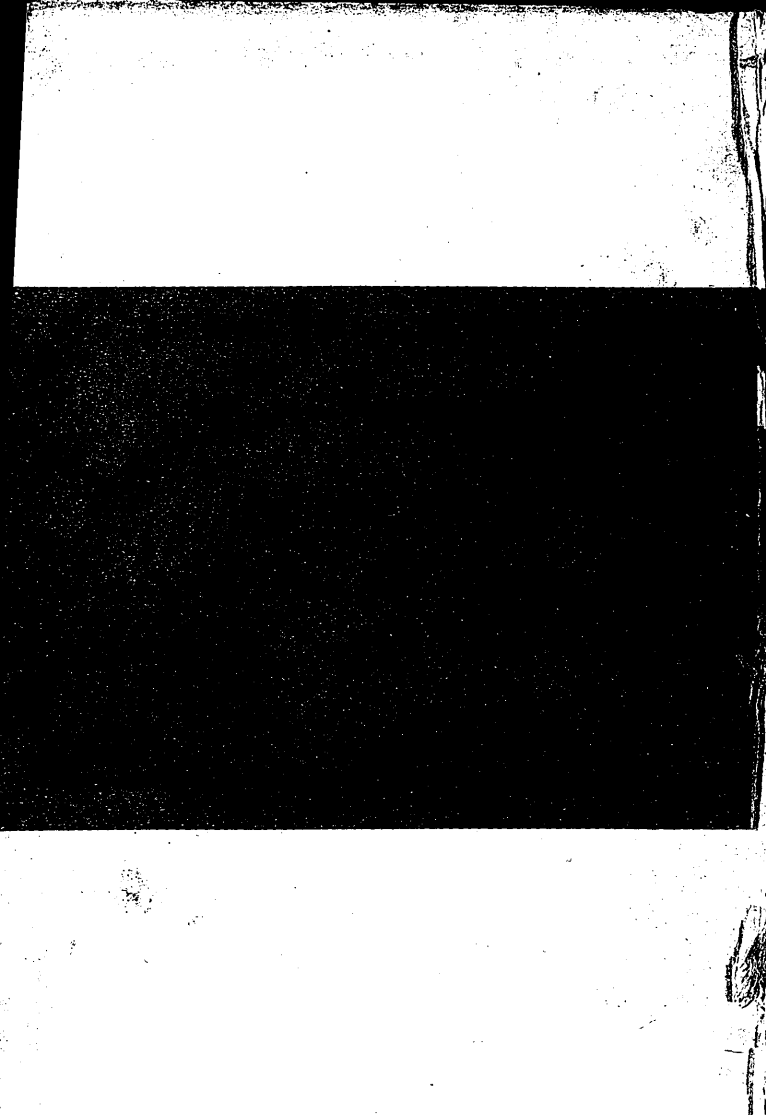
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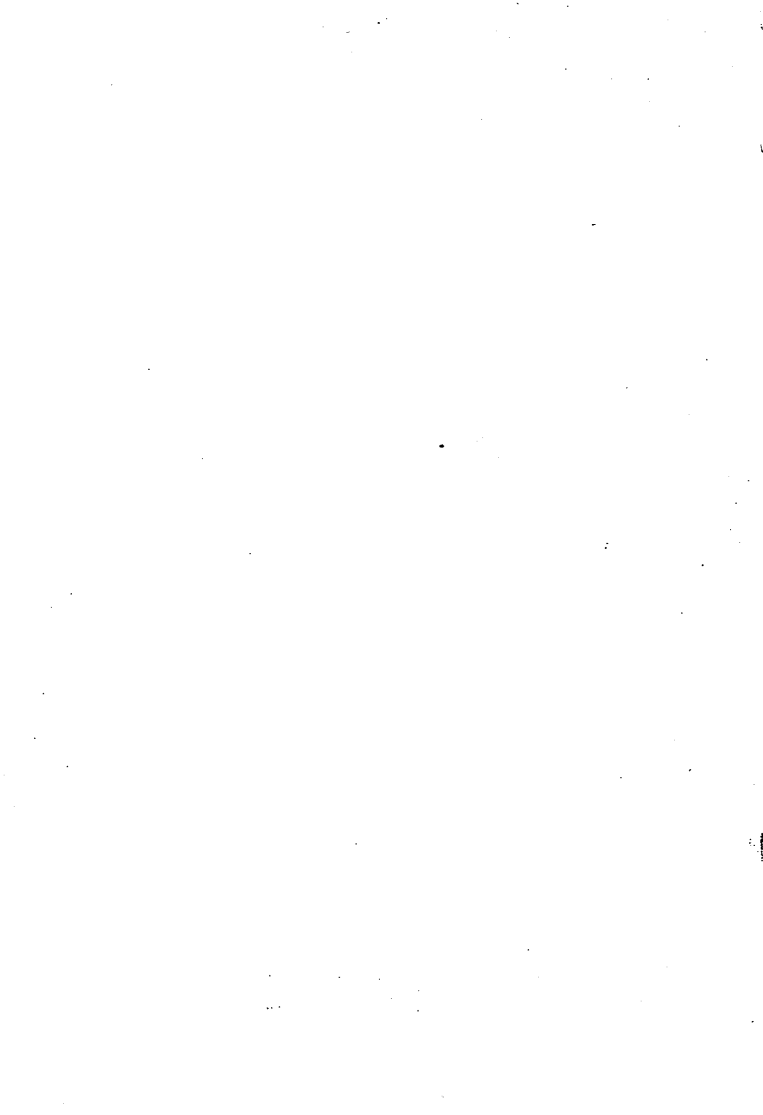


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POPERY UNVEILED.



Grosier, William

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POPERY UNVEILED,

IN

SIX LECTURES.

LONDON:

THE-RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,-

Instituted 1799;

SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY, 56, PATERNOSTER ROW,
AND 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD;
AND BY THE BOOKSELLERS.

1839.

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THESE Lectures having been prepared for the press with an immediate view to their circulation by the Religious Tract Society, the author has, in revising them, kept steadily before his mind the principles of that institution, which restrict its publications to "those evangelical principles of the reformation, in which Luther, Calvin, and Cranmer were agreed; and to that system of doctrine and of scriptural interpretation, which is comprised in the Harmony of the confessions of the reformed churches both at home and abroad." It is not the design of these lectures to give a portraiture of protestantism, or to bring into immediate contrast with the church of Rome any one of the churches that are opposed to her pretensions. This is not necessary to a just view of popery, or of its claims. The claims of the Romish church being peculiar and exclusive, they are sufficiently disposed of when it is shown that they are unfounded and injurious.

Nor are these lectures addressed primarily to adherents of the Romish church, with the

hope of convincing them that they are in error, and bringing them over to a purer community. Should this ensue in any case from the perusal, it will be a gratifying result; but it is not to Roman Catholics that the author speaks, it is to professed Protestants and their children. Greater attention has been paid, therefore, to accuracy in exhibiting to view the dogmas and practices of the Romish church, than to the refutation of the arguments used to vindicate them. To fortify the mind of the reader against the insidious statements by which the Romish clergy too frequently seek to gain converts; to guard him against those approximations to the baneful system to which there is a natural tendency in the human heart; to prepare him to judge correctly of the course which true Christianity teaches him to pursue towards the adherents of the papacy; to excite gratitude to the Father of mercies for our freedom from the domination of the Romish hierarchy; and to direct attention to the one Mediator, the Dispenser of all spiritual blessings, and to his inspired word, are the chief purposes for which this small volume is now submitted to the British public.

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SIX LECTURES ON POPERY.

LECTURE I.

ON ITS PRINCIPLES.

“That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”—2 *Thess.* ii. 3, 4.

It is desirable that every intelligent inhabitant of this country should be acquainted with the peculiarities of that system which, on account of its connexion with the bishop of Rome, is commonly denominated Popery. It is a system which has exerted its influence over the whole civilized world for many hundred years, and has produced abiding effects on the moral, the social, and the religious condition of every nation which has been subjected to its sway. It is a system to which now some millions of our fellow-subjects, and countless multitudes of foreigners, are strongly attached. It is a system which possesses great inherent energy, and excites its friends to active and unceasing efforts to extend its power, and augment the

number of its adherents. There is connected with it much that is attractive, and much that is magnificent; much that is congenial to the natural propensities of the human heart, and much of which a skilful advocate can readily avail himself to fascinate the imagination of his auditors, and excite their passions.

The Romish church is asking also for public attention: it demands to be heard, indeed, so loudly and so frequently, that it is impossible for any one who observes what is passing around him, to banish it entirely from his mind. It is continually boasting of its advances upon our territory, and adopting means to compel us to hearken to its claims. Various causes have combined to indispose large classes of the community to enter upon an investigation of its pretensions, or contemplate the bearings of the controversy of which it is the subject; but it is itself as much averse to indifference as to opposition, and if its adversaries were all silent, it would still continue to plead. Now it is essential to our interests, and to the interests of those around us, that whenever the time shall come that we must give ear to its advocates, we should be in a condition to estimate their arguments at their real value. This, many are not prepared to do, whose attainments in literature are eminent, and whose general knowledge is extensive. Some are profoundly ignorant, and others have mistaken prejudices for solid convictions. Their antipathies have perhaps been strongly excited, but it has been by accidents, and abuses of Romish tenets, rather than by the tenets themselves. When asked their objections to the Romish church, they refer to practices, which, though generally

observed by its votaries, are not, as they would quickly be told by a dexterous opponent, of indispensable obligation. They advert to some dogma which seems to them peculiarly obnoxious, and they are informed that though it has been held as an opinion by some orthodox divines, it is not an article of faith. Thousands of our countrymen who believe themselves to be among the firmest of protestants, if assailed by a skilful missionary of the Romish church, would find themselves utterly defenceless, and, it may be feared, would prove ready victims to the dazzling sophistry of statements which would at once astonish and subdue them.

To describe the characteristics of a religious community, in order to expose errors and faults, is an invidious task. Controversy is so apt to engender strife, to widen differences, and to alienate hearts which should be united, that it ought never to be undertaken without substantial reason. It is, however, sometimes necessary to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;" and he who is habitually solicitous to avoid the appearance of hostility towards any class of professed Christians, must perceive that silence respecting the opinions and arguments of others may, in particular circumstances, be injurious to the cause of truth and righteousness. There is a very marked distinction also, between the case of the church of Rome, and that of all other Christian churches. The system, which, for the sake of giving it a compendious and characteristic name, we call Popery, is a departure, and a gross departure from the faith of Jesus Christ. This corruption was clearly predicted in the apostolic writings; its

existence is therefore a confirmation of the truth of Christianity, as showing the correctness of New Testament prophecy. Foreknown, foretold, and yet permitted to arise, its existence must have been designed to answer some beneficial purposes, and its history must be adapted to give some salutary lessons, to the disciples of our Lord in these later ages of the world. But how are we to derive these benefits, unless we are acquainted with its nature and its progress? It is necessary that we should ascertain what its principles are, and in what its peculiarities consist, that we should know in what manner it arose, and what effects it produces, or we shall neither discern the correspondence between the prediction and the event, nor reap those advantages from its sad example, which that example might afford. It was not a pleasant exercise to inspired men to record and publish the murmurings, the rebellions, and the idolatries of the emancipated Hebrews; but as these things were intended as "ensamples," it was proper that they should be written for the admonition of those who might live in after times, and the apostle Paul did not wish his Corinthian friends to be ignorant of them.

It is to the PRINCIPLES of Popery that we must first direct our attention. The practices which are by many supposed to be its most objectionable features, arise naturally from what may be termed its fundamental doctrines. It is necessary to understand these, therefore, in order to have a clear and comprehensive view of its genius and tendency.

It is not, however, needful to descant on those doctrines which are held by the church of Rome

in common with Protestants. It is but just to say that much that is evangelical is retained in its creed, and incorporated with its services. It adheres to the scriptural doctrine of the Unity of God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. It teaches that the only-begotten of the Father assumed our nature, laid down his life as an atoning sacrifice on the cross, and rose from the dead to intercede and reign in heaven. It recognizes the existence and operations of the Holy Spirit; it acknowledges the future resurrection of the dead, the definitive authority of the judgment-seat of Christ, and the perpetual happiness of the servants of God in his immediate presence. But it is not to the points on which we cordially agree with it, it is not to the points on which it differs from pagans, Mohammedans, infidels, or Jews, that we have now to attend; but to the leading principles which distinguish it from other Christian churches.

These are three: the first, the insufficiency of the Scriptures to be the Christian rule of faith and practice; the second, the right of the Romish clergy to supply the deficiency, by authoritatively fixing the doctrines to be believed, and the precepts to be observed; and the third, the supremacy of the bishop of Rome over all other ministers, and over all Christian people. Every well-informed Roman catholic must admit that these are the distinctive features of his system. If these principles can be established, our protestantism must fall: if any one of them could be proved, our cause would be endangered. From these all the subordinate parts naturally proceed, and by reference to these, every one of them is sought to be justified.

The first principle, the basis of all the rest, is that the Scriptures are insufficient to be the Christian rule of faith and practice. On this the whole controversy turns: "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants." The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, we believe, were given by Divine inspiration, and possess Divine authority. Their statements we consider universally true, and their decisions inviolably binding; thence we derive our belief of those doctrines on which our hopes for eternity are built. The compassionate love of the Father in giving his Son for our redemption; the ability of Jesus Christ to save to the uttermost, and his willingness to receive every returning sinner; the gift of the Holy Spirit to them that ask, and the privileges granted to real believers; the whole of that glorious system which constitutes the foundation of our spiritual peace, and our grateful exertions, we receive solely on the testimony of the sacred record. So sufficient do we consider the written word of God, that we hesitate not to affirm, that he who studies it with an humble, docile heart, earnestly entreating the Father of lights to give him a correct perception of its meaning, will not materially err; but will learn all that is necessary, to teach him to glorify God on earth, and to guide him to heaven. We do not say, that every part of the holy volume is equally plain; that every man who reads it is qualified to expound it to others; or that there are no mysterious portions concerning which the most penetrating and judicious divine must confess, that after all his researches, he is unable to understand them. But we do say, that "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the

soul," and that "the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." We do say, that the injunction to "search the scriptures" of the Old Testament was given by Jesus Christ to the Jews; that the determination of the Bereans to examine the apostle's testimony by the light of those sacred writings they previously possessed, called forth commendation from an inspired historian; and that the epistles, in general, were directed, not to individuals who had made extraordinary proficiency in Christian knowledge, but to the churches at large, and intended for the perusal of "all the holy brethren." To every inquirer, therefore, we, as protestants, present the incomparable volume. This, we say to him, is the statute-book of Heaven; this is the revelation which God himself has given. Here is unmingled truth; read it with reverence and humility of heart; avail yourself of every aid within your reach which may assist you to understand its meaning, and discern its beauties. If you have opportunity to do so, peruse those books which are adapted to illustrate its contents. Listen with deference to the opinions of the learned and the pious; but remember the ultimate decision rests with yourself: to God you are responsible for your conduct, and for the use you make of the "lamp" he has provided for your "feet;" that responsibility you cannot transfer to another. "Every man shall bear his own burden." "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." If any man should claim "dominion over your faith," say to him boldly, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to

every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear," Rom. xiv. 4; 1 Pet. iii. 15.

Widely different is the doctrine of the Romish church. Its advocates admit that the Scriptures are inspired, and that Divine authority attaches to their contents; but still deny that they are a sufficient rule. Traditions handed down from the times of the apostles, but never written, are, they contend, of equal authority with the sacred records, and equally necessary to a complete exhibition of the religion of Jesus Christ. And even with the Scriptures in your hand, and a knowledge of tradition to assist you, according to their tenets, you are still incompetent to judge for yourself what you are to believe, or how you ought to act. You must be guided by the decisions of the Church; the Church being constituted by Christ the living interpreter of Scripture, and the authoritative judge of all opinions and practices.

Controvertists are very apt to misrepresent the views of their opponents, even when they have no intention of doing so, simply because they do not fully understand the meaning of those from whom they differ. It will be well, therefore, as this is the most important point in our whole investigation, to adduce evidence that the representation now given is quite correct. Proof shall be furnished, then, drawn from the writings of a man of extensive learning and great circumspection, whose defence of the church of Rome is regarded by English catholics as pre-eminent in merit, unanswered, and unanswerable. The Rev. Doctor Milner, late vicar apostolic of the midland district of England, in his work entitled "The End of

Religious Controversy," remarks, that on the determination of the question respecting the right rule of faith, every other depends; and expresses his views of the subject in the following language:

"Among serious Christians, who profess to make the discovery and practice of religion their first and earnest care, three different methods or rules have been adopted for this purpose. The first consists in a supposed private inspiration, or an immediate light and motion of God's Spirit, communicated to the individual. This was the rule of faith and conduct formerly professed by the Montanists, the Anabaptists, the Family of Love, and is now professed by the Quakers, the Moravians, and different classes of the Methodists. The second of these rules is the written word of God, or the Bible, according as it is understood by each particular reader or hearer of it. This is the professed rule of the more regular sects of protestants, such as the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Socinians, the Church of England men. The third rule is the word of God at large, whether written in the Bible, or handed down from the apostles in continued succession by the catholic church; and as it is understood and explained by this church. To speak more accurately, beside their rule of faith, which is scripture and tradition, catholics acknowledge an unerring judge of controversy, or sure guide in all matters relating to salvation, namely, the Church."*

* In the Laity's Directory, a work which is published annually under the authority of the vicars apostolic in England, Dr. Milner, who died in 1826, is eulogized as the author of publications "either of which is sufficient to rank him amongst the most learned, ingenious, and able

In defence of this rule, Dr. Milner argues in a very ingenious way, and at considerable length ; but in a manner quite inconclusive ; not certainly for want of acuteness or diversified information in the advocate, but solely through the badness of his cause. To set forth his arguments at length, would be the work, not of one discourse, but of many ; accept a summary of them in his own words :

“I have now, dear Sir, fully proved what I undertook to prove ; that the rule of faith professed by rational protestants, that of Scripture as interpreted by each person’s private judgment, is no less fallacious than the rule of fanatics, who imagine themselves to be directed by an individual, private inspiration. I have shown that this rule is evidently unserviceable to infinitely the greater part of mankind ; that it is liable to lead men into error, and that it has actually led vast numbers of them into endless errors and shocking impieties. The proof of these points was sufficient, according to the principles I laid down at the beginning of our controversy, to disprove the rule itself. But I have, moreover, demonstrated, that our Divine

of our defenders of the catholic faith,” and *The End of Religious Controversy* is called “his last and greatest work.” Numerous quotations from this volume will be found in these lectures, as this may be fairly assumed to be an exhibition of the Roman Catholic religion, as now taught in England, sanctioned by the highest authority. Occasionally, however, reference will be made to the writings of other advocates of Romanism, and especially to the “*Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church*,” recently published by the Rev. N. Wiseman, D.D., Professor in the University of Rome.

Master, Christ, did not establish this rule, nor his apostles follow it; that the protestant churches, and that of England in particular, were not founded according to this rule; that individual protestants have not been guided by it in the choice of their religion; and finally, that the adoption of it leads to uncertainty and uneasiness of mind in life, and more particularly at the hour of death. On the other hand, I have shown that the catholic rule, that of the entire word of God, unwritten as well as written, together with the authority of the living pastors of the church in explaining it, was appointed by Christ; was followed by the apostles; was maintained by the holy fathers; has been resorted to from necessity, in both particulars, by the protestant congregations, though with the worst success, from the impossibility of uniting private judgment with it; that tradition lays a firm ground for divine faith in scripture; that these two united together as one rule, and each bearing testimony to the living, speaking authority of the church in expounding that rule, this church is preserved in peace and union, through all ages and nations: and in short, that catholics, by adhering to this rule and authority, live and die in peace and security, as far as regards the truth of their religion.”*

How important this rule of faith is to the popish cause, will appear, if we consider that it furnishes an answer to all objections drawn from Scripture, against any sentiment, or any practice. Once admit it, and the controversy is ended. Its universal applicability immediately neutralizes objections even against itself. This great convenience belonging

* End of Controversy, pp. 103, 104.

to his ponderous shield, the vicar apostolic illustrates well: for though he attempts to explain away the texts most evidently hostile to his system, he discreetly provides, in case of imminent danger, this never-failing refuge: "Before I enter on the discussion of any part of Scripture with you or your friends, I am bound, dear Sir, in conformity with my rule of faith, as explained by the fathers, and particularly by Tertullian, to protest against your and their right to argue from Scripture; and of course must deny that there is any necessity of my replying to any objections you may draw from it. For I have reminded you, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation; and I have proved to you, that the whole right to the Scriptures belongs to the Church. She has preserved them; she vouches for them; and she alone, by confronting the several passages with each other, and with tradition, authoritatively explains them. Hence it is impossible that the real sense of Scripture should ever be against her and her doctrine; and hence, of course, I might quash every objection which you can draw from any passage in it by this short reply, The Church understands the passage differently from you; therefore you mistake its meaning."*

If then, reader, you were to enter into the church of Rome, you must abjure your right to interpret for yourself the plainest sentence in the book of God. You may be a man of extensive attainments and patient research; biblical studies may have engaged your attention half a century; the original languages in which the Scriptures were written

* End of Controversy, p. 106.

may be as familiar to you as your own: still, according to this doctrine, you must not form an independent opinion respecting one article of faith. Your guide is the decision of your priest; he is your oracle: and if you err under his direction, the fault is his. Has he a right then to examine for himself? No more than you have; for every article of his creed he is responsible to his superior. Has that superior the privilege of thinking for himself? Far from it! Even his Holiness, with all his lofty pretensions, by the exercise of private judgment would become a heretic.* He, also, must decide according to previous decisions. The decrees of councils and the acknowledged fragments of antiquity bind him as firmly as they bind the most illiterate peasant. Were he convinced that some page of the inspired writings pointedly

* Heresy has been attributed to several popes by synods and councils: some have been deposed. John XXII. was threatened, according to the testimony of Cardinal d'Ailly, that if he did not retract some of his opinions he should be burnt as a heretic: the pontiff renounced his peculiarities. See "Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, by George Campbell, D.D.;" lecture 14. In entire accordance with these statements is the following language of Dr. Wiseman:—"The moment any catholic doubts, not alone the principle of his faith, but any one of those doctrines which are thereon based—the moment he allows himself to call in question any of the dogmas which the catholic church teaches as having been handed down within her—that moment the church conceives him to have virtually abandoned all connexion with her: for she exacts such implicit obedience, that if any member, however valuable, however he may have devoted his early talents to the illustration of her doctrines, fall away from his belief in any one point, he is cut off without reserve; and we have in our own times seen striking and awful instances of this fact."—Lectures, vol. i. p. 77.

condemned a tenet which had obtained the sanction of former ages, his perception of the fact would be unavailing; all his representations would be met by the ready and invincible rejoinder, "The Church understands the passage differently from you; therefore you mistake its meaning." Thus, a return from error to truth is rendered hopeless; a mistake once made becomes permanent: it is part of a system which must support its character of unchanging uniformity. The word of God is made "of none effect," through human tradition. The key of knowledge is taken from the people, and cast into the Tiber.

Who could have supposed, had there not been evidence to prove it, that such a system should profess accordance with that book, in which conformity to the written word is represented as the test by which the spirits of the prophets should be tried; a book which says, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isa. viii. 20. Who could have imagined that such should be the doctrine of a church, which acknowledges the authority of that epistle in which we read, that all scripture given by inspiration of God, "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. Can this, some, it is probable, are ready to ask, can this be the religion of one hundred and fifty millions of the human race? Is this the creed of the enlightened catholics of the nineteenth century? Are not these exploded tenets found only among the writers of the middle ages? Alas! this is the doctrine of

the whole Romish church, maintained as tenaciously as ever, and sanctioned by the highest authorities. It is a melancholy fact, that the governors of that extensive community, while they confess the Divine origin of the Bible, discountenance its perusal. It is undeniably true, that the bulk of their adherents are not permitted even to possess a copy of the New Testament.

There is in print a letter from the late Pope Leo XII. to his clergy, issued on occasion of his advancement to the papal throne, bearing date, "3rd day of May, 1824." You need not doubt its authenticity, as it is printed by the printer and bookseller to the royal college of St. Patrick, Maynooth, and publisher to the Roman catholic bishops of Ireland. Here, if any where, you may expect to find the genuine doctrine of the Romish church; and here you will perceive undissembled antipathy to the general circulation of the word of truth.

"The wickedness of our foes," writes the pontiff, "has proceeded so far, that, in addition to a deluge of pernicious books, hostile to religion, they endeavour to employ, to its detriment, the sacred Scriptures, which were given to us by God for its support.

"You are aware, venerable brethren, that a certain society, called the Bible Society, strolls with effrontery throughout the world;* which society, contemning the traditions of the holy fathers, and contrary to the well-known decree of the Council of Trent, labours with all its might,

* "Non vos latet V V. F F. Societatem quamdam dictam vulgo Biblicam, per totam orbem audacter vagari."

and by every means, to translate, or rather to pervert, the Holy Bible into the vulgar languages of every nation; from which proceeding it is greatly to be feared, that what is ascertained to have happened as to some passages, may also occur with regard to others; to wit: 'that by a perverse interpretation, the gospel of Christ be turned into a human gospel; or, what is still worse, into the gospel of the devil.'

"To avert this plague, our predecessors published many ordinances; and in his latter days, Pius VII. of blessed memory, sent two briefs, one to Ignatius, Archbishop of Gnesen; the other to Stanislaus, Archbishop of Mohilow; in which are many proofs, accurately and wisely collected from the sacred Scriptures and from tradition, to show how noxious this most wicked novelty is to both faith and morals.*

* An extract from one of these instruments so much admired by the "father of the faithful," will form a suitable accompaniment to his own production. The brief addressed to the Archbishop of Mohilow, by Pius VII., contains the following characteristic passages. "We were still more deeply grieved, when we read certain letters, signed with the name of you, our brother; wherein you authorised and exhorted the people committed to your care, to procure for themselves modern versions of the Bible, or willingly to accept them when offered, and carefully and attentively to peruse them! Nothing, certainly, could more aggravate our grief than to behold you, who were placed to point out the ways of righteousness, become a stone of stumbling. For you ought carefully to have kept in view what our predecessors have always prescribed, namely, 'that if the Holy Bible in the vulgar tongue were permitted every where without discrimination, more injury than benefit would thence arise.' You see, therefore, venerable brother, what ought to be our mode of acting toward you, if we were disposed to enforce

“We also, venerable brethren, in conformity with our apostolic duty, exhort you to turn away

the severity of the canon laws! ‘For,’ said St. Thomas of Canterbury, ‘he who does not come forward to remove what ought to be corrected, gives his sanction to error; nor is he free from suspicion of a secret confederacy, who evidently neglects to oppose mischief.’ But we, for the love we bear you, insist only upon that thing from which, since it must be enjoined upon you by Divine authority, we cannot refrain; namely, that you would take away the scandal which, by this mode of acting, you have occasioned. Hence we most earnestly exhort you, our brother, and beseech you by the bowels of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you will strive to repair, by a due and speedy amendment, all those things which you have improperly taught or done concerning the new versions of the Bible; and I wish, venerable brother, emulating the example of illustrious men, which procured for them such honour, that you would consider how you might reprobate those deeds by a solemn and formal retractation! We cannot, however, avoid exciting you, and by virtue of holy obedience we even command you, to do at least what is necessary for preserving the purity of doctrine, and the integrity of the faith; namely, that in a fresh letter addressed to the people, containing the whole contents both of the decree of the council of Trent, and of the letter of Pius VI. on this subject, you should sincerely and plainly teach, that the Christian truth and doctrine, as well dogmatical as moral, are contained not in the Scriptures only, but also in the traditions of the catholic church; and that it belongs to the church herself alone to interpret each of them. Moreover, you should declare, that you did not intend to recommend those versions of the sacred books in the vulgar tongues, which were not exactly conformable to the rules prescribed by the canons and apostolic institutions: lastly, you should make known and likewise declare, that, in advising and recommending the perusal of these divine Scriptures, you had not respect to all the faithful indiscriminately, but only to ecclesiastical persons, or, at most, to those laymen who, in the judgment of their pastors, were sufficiently instructed.”

your flock by all means from these poisonous pastures. Reprove, beseech, be instant in season and out of season, in all patience and doctrine, that the faithful intrusted to you (adhering strictly to the rules of our congregation of the Index) be persuaded, that if the sacred Scriptures be every where indiscriminately published, more evil than advantage will arise thence, on account of the rashness of men. Which truth is not only proved by experience, but St. Augustine, as well as the other holy fathers, has announced it in the following words: 'For heresies have arisen, and certain perverse doctrines, ensnaring souls and precipitating them into the abyss, have been broached only when the good Scriptures had been badly understood, and when that which was badly understood in them, was rashly and boldly asserted.'

"Behold, then, venerable brethren, the tendency of this society, which, moreover, to attain its ends, leaves nothing untried; for not only does it print its translations, but also wandering through the towns and cities, it delights in distributing them amongst the crowd. Nay, to allure the minds of the simple, at one time it sells them, at another, with an insidious liberality it bestows them."*

And what say the popish archbishops and bishops in Ireland to this letter? Do they disavow it? No! it suits their taste. They have not been ashamed to affix their names to an address directed to all the faithful, clergy, and people, committed to

* "The Encyclical Letter of Pope Leo XII. to his venerable brethren, the patriarchs, primates, archbishops, and bishops, of the Catholic Church; with an English translation of the same. Dublin: printed by Richard Coyne, 1824."

their care, on the occasion, in which they express themselves thus :

“ On receiving this letter, replete with truth and wisdom, we at once recognized the voice of him for whom our Redeemer prayed that his faith might not fail, and to whose ardent charity he intrusted the care of his entire flock. We exclaimed, therefore, with the bishops of the catholic church, formerly assembled in council at Chalcedon, ‘ Peter has spoken by Leo.’ Excited thus, dearest brethren, by the example and exhortation of our chief and head, we have hastened, not only to communicate to you his words, but also to add to them such admonitions and advice as our local knowledge and more immediate connexion with you enable us to give.

“ Our holy father recommends to the observance of the faithful, a rule of the congregation of the Index, which prohibits the perusal of the sacred Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, without the sanction of the competent authorities. His holiness wisely remarks, ‘ that more evil than good is found to result from the indiscriminate perusal of them, on account of the malice or infirmity of men.’ In this sentiment of our head and chief we fully concur ; and a sad experience of its justice is found in the excesses and conflicting errors of those sects amongst whom such perusal is unrestrained. With us it is not so ; and approved versions of the Holy Scriptures, with notes explanatory of the text, are read by many of you with edification and advantage. We rejoice, dearly beloved, that the word of God should dwell abundantly with you ; it is useful to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice ; and when read with piety and devotion, especially

in families and at the time of prayer, it assists the man of God, whose heart is humble, and whose understanding is captivated to the obedience due to Christ and to his holy church, to become perfect, and to be furnished unto every good work. 'But as heresies have arisen, and perverse doctrines, ensnaring souls and precipitating them into the abyss, have been broached only when the good Scriptures have been badly understood, and when that which was badly understood was rashly and boldly asserted,' hence it is necessary that such passages as are hard to be understood, and which the ignorant and unsettled daily wrest to their perdition, be always received in that sense which the church of God has assigned to them, and which is the same that she had been taught by the Holy Ghost. In reading, therefore, the sacred Scriptures, dearly beloved, seek only to become wise to salvation, and to avoid that most perverse of all errors, that source of numberless evils, that pride and presumption which has desolated the church, and which would tempt you to set up your own weak and fallible judgment against the judgment of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, which is the pillar and ground of truth, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and directed and governed in all her decisions by the Son of God.

"As to the books which are distributed by the Bible Society, under the names of Bibles, or Testaments, or tracts, or whatsoever name may be given to them, as they treat of religion and are not sanctioned by us, or by any competent authority in the catholic church, the use, the perusal, the reading, or retaining of them, is entirely and without any exception, prohibited to you. To enter into their

merits or demerits is foreign to our purpose : such of them as have come under our observation are replete with errors, many of them are heretical, and generally they abound in calumnies or misrepresentations against our holy religion : as such they are carefully to be avoided ; and should any of them happen to be in your possession, they are to be restored to the persons who may have bestowed them to you, or otherwise to be destroyed ; except Bibles or Testaments, which, if not returned to the donors, are to be deposited with the parish priest."

It is evident that hostility to the exercise of personal judgment respecting religious truth, and to the promulgation of the oracles of God, characterises the system of which we speak, both where it is subjected to the softening influence of a protestant vicinity, and where it dwells alone ; where it is merely tolerated, and where it reigns in undisputed greatness. Popery, in England, in Ireland, and in Italy, is so far uniform ; it appeals from the written word to unwritten traditions, and requires from all its votaries unreserved submission to the interpretations of the Church. The insufficiency of the Scriptures to be the rule of faith, is its fundamental principle : the nature of the superstructure, erected on this foundation, will appear in the course of our subsequent inquiries.*

* That this is tenaciously held, even where Popery exists in its mildest form, and insisted upon by those whose aim it is to exhibit it in its gentlest bearings, may be seen in the following passages, among many, which occur in Dr. Wiseman's lectures.

" It must be manifest, that, if we establish that right whereon, alone, we base all particular doctrines ; if, in other words, we can prove that, besides the written word

The second great principle of Popery is the right of the Romish clergy to supply the deficiency of which they tell us, by authoritatively fixing the doctrines to be believed, and the precepts to be observed.

of God, an infallible authority exists, and always has existed in the church, which, being under the guidance of God, cannot be deceived in sanctioning any thing as having been revealed by him, assuredly we, likewise, make good all those different points on which we are charged with having fallen into error, but which thus will be proved to have their foundation on an authority derived from God: and therefore, however for the sake of entirely convincing the minds of those who doubt, and of more easily satisfying their peculiar difficulties, we may be induced to treat singly such points as I have instanced,—it is evident, that they are all virtually and essentially demonstrated, if this one leading fundamental proposition can be proved; and thus, all the questions of fact are absorbed in the one touching the divine right possessed by the church to decide, without danger of error, in all matters regarding faith." Vol. i. p. 4.

"The existence of an authority to teach *excludes*, not, indeed, the Scripture, but the *all-sufficiency* of Scripture." Vol. i. p. 67.

"I need not state to you again, what is the great and important difference between us and more modern creeds; it is that difference of which an eminent divine of the Protestant church, and one who has written the most strongly, perhaps, in favour of its grounds of faith, observes, that 'the whole of modern religion may be said to differ essentially on this one point, What is the ground-work whereon faith is to be built?' I rehearsed to you in my preliminary discourses what are the respective opinions of the two churches, and I fully developed the principle of the catholic rule of faith, consisting in the belief, that there was constituted by God a compact body or society of teachers, to whom he gave a promise that he should always assist them, so as ever to instruct, through them, to the end of time. The conclusion was, that the church or organized society, which he had made the depositary of his truth, should not be liable to the smallest error." Vol. i. p. 298.

It may be said by some, if we allow that the Scriptures are not an adequate directory; if we concede the incompetence of the poor, the ignorant, and the busy, to interpret for themselves; yet, why should they not rely on the instructions of their own clergy, as properly as on those of the clergy of the church of Rome? Have there not been men as learned in the churches of England, of Scotland, of Saxony, and of Switzerland, as any among the Romish hierarchy? Aware of our ignorance of medical science, we choose our own physician; why should we not also select our own religious instructor? By all means do so, replies the Roman catholic advocate; only be careful to commit yourself to the guidance of a regular practitioner. Ascertain among the various competitors for your confidence, which is most worthy, and then surrender your consciences to his custody. The church of Rome is the only Christian church; its ministers, therefore, are the only true depositaries of Christian doctrine.

“As long,” says Dr. Milner, “as you professed to hunt out the several articles of Divine revelation, one by one, through the several books of Scripture, and under all the difficulties and uncertainties which, as I have clearly shown, attend this study, your task was interminable, and your success hopeless: whereas, now, by taking the church of God for your guide, you have but one simple inquiry to make: Which is this church? Because, if there is any one religious truth more evident than the others from reason, from the Scriptures, both old and new, from the Apostles’ Creed, and from constant tradition, it is this, that the catholic church preserves the true worship of the Deity;

she being the fountain of truth, the house of faith, and the temple of God, as an ancient father of the church expresses it. Hence it is as clear as the noon-day light, that by solving this one question, Which is the true church? you will at once solve every question of religious controversy that ever has been, or that ever can be agitated. You will not need to spend your life in studying the sacred Scriptures in their original languages and their authentic copies, and in confronting passages with each other, from Genesis to Revelation, (a task by no means calculated, as is evident, for the bulk of mankind) you will only have to hear what the church teaches upon the several articles of her faith, in order to know with certainty what God has revealed concerning them. Neither need you hearken to contending sects, and doctors of the present or of past times; you will need only to hear the church, which, indeed, Christ commands you to hear, under pain of being treated as a heathen or a publican. If you admit, but for an instant, church authority, then Luther, Calvin, and Cranmer, with all the other founders of protestantism, were evidently heretics in rebelling against it. In short, no other church but the catholic can claim to be a religious guide, because, evidently, she alone is the true church of Christ. This assertion leads me to the proof of what I asserted above respecting the facility and certainty with which persons of good-will may solve that most important question, Which is the true church?"*

Perhaps, reader, you now expect, as you are encouraged to measure the temple, that for this

* End of Controversy, pp. 118, 119.

purpose you are to be intrusted with the reed. Perhaps you imagine, that, for a few days at least, while you are examining the claims of different churches, you will be permitted to inspect a Bible. Perhaps you suppose that you are to compare the doctrine of the Romish church with the doctrine of Jesus Christ; the character of the Romish clergy with the character of the apostles; the spirit which they breathe with the spirit the New Testament encourages; the practices they inculcate with the precepts of the inspired volume. But far, far away, be such an heretical supposition; these would, indeed, be fatal errors; this would lead you to protestantism at once! Other tests, better adapted to their purpose, are supplied by the Romish clergy, according to which they invite you to determine the exclusive right of their community to be denominated "the church of Christ." The church of Christ, say they, is one; the church of Christ is holy; the church of Christ is catholic; the church of Christ is apostolic: judge by these criteria, and you will see that the church of Christ is, the church of Rome.

Our Church, say they, is One: you are divided into innumerable sects; dissonant in sentiment; hostile in feeling; various in practice. Can yours be the one fold, under the one Shepherd? We, on the contrary, say they, are all under one government, our doctrine is every where the same, and our liturgy is uniform.*

* "The same creeds (namely, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, [together with] the Creed of Pope Pius IV., drawn up in conformity with the definitions of the Council of Trent) are every where recited and professed, to the strict letter; the same articles of faith and morality are taught in all our catechisms,

Our Church, say they, is Holy. Its doctrine must be holy, for it is the same as that of the apostles, we are not permitted to change it; whereas many among you have promulgated impious sentiments. We have greater means of holiness than you have, for we have seven sacraments, and you have only two. We can boast innumerable saints who lived and died in our communion, while your first reformers were wicked men. It was to gratify the base passions of Henry the Eighth, that the Reformation was effected in England; and similar causes have conduced to it elsewhere. We have Divine attestations to our sanctity in miracles wrought by the members of our church; but the power of working miracles does not exist among you.*

Our Church, say they, is Catholic. Go where

the same rule of faith, namely, the revealed word of God contained in scripture and tradition, and the same expositor and interpreter of this rule, the Catholic Church speaking by the mouth of her pastors, are admitted and proclaimed by all catholics throughout the four quarters of the globe, from Ireland to Chili, and from Canada to India. You may convince yourself of this any day, at the Royal Exchange, by conversing with intelligent Catholic merchants from the several countries in question."
 "At all events the Catholics, if properly interrogated, will confess their belief in one comprehensive article; namely, this: I believe whatever the Holy Catholic Church believes and teaches."—*End of Controversy*, p. 131.

* "The comparison which I am going to institute between the Catholic church and the leading Protestant societies on the article of Sanctity or Holiness, will be made on these four heads. First, the Doctrine of Holiness; secondly, the Means of Holiness; thirdly, the Fruits of Holiness; and lastly, the Divine Testimony of Holiness."—*Ut supra*, p. 141.

you will and inquire for the Catholic Church, you are pointed to ours. We are more numerous than others, as well as more ancient. We are to be found wherever Christianity prevails; we have descended from the earliest ages: but your churches are not universal, with respect either to time, or to place.*

Our Church, say they, is Apostolic. Our ministers have received ordination from legitimate hands. The apostles ordained bishops; those bishops ordained others; the succession has been uninterrupted; from generation to generation the efficacy of the apostolic sanction has been transmitted to our times. We are the duly authorized; you have no right to administer sacraments, or guide the flock; whatever you may arrogate to yourselves, we can prove your ordination to be invalid.†

* "If any stranger in London, Edinburgh, or Amsterdam, were to ask his way to the Catholic Chapel, I would risk my life for it, that no sober Protestant inhabitant would direct him to any other place of worship than to ours. On the other hand, it is notorious, that the different sects of Protestants, like the heretics and schismatics of old, are denominated either from their founders, as the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Socinians, &c. or from the countries in which they prevail, as the Church of England, the Kirk of Scotland, the Moravians, &c. or from some novelty in their belief or practice, as the Anabaptists, the Independents, the Quakers, &c."—*Ut supra*, p. 192.

† "Every catholic pastor is authorized and enabled to address his flock as follows: 'The word of God which I announce to you and the holy sacraments which I dispense to you, I am QUALIFIED to announce and dispense by such a catholic bishop, who was consecrated by such another catholic bishop, and so on, in a series which reaches to the apostles themselves, and I am AUTHORIZED

These various topics, wrought up by men of shrewdness and information, furnish a very plausible apology for calling their church, **THE Church**; and for maintaining that out of it there is no salvation. By these arguments they endeavour to establish their right to treat all others as heretical schismatics; and to render it evident that they have a monopoly of truth, and a patent to interpret the Scriptures. But we cannot concede that these are the tests by which the claims of their community should be determined. We cannot consent to make our investigation in the dark; but must repeat our call for the light of revelation to assist us in forming our judgment. And with this light to guide us, we clearly perceive that the pillars they themselves have selected to support their edifice, are bending and ready to fall beneath its weight.

Do they say that they are One? So were the Babel builders. "Behold," said the Almighty, "the people is one!" One language was on their lips. One purpose was in their hearts. One course was pursued by them all in their desperate career of folly. Gen. xi. 4.

Do they say that they are Holy? So did the ancient Jews, whose hypocrisy Isaiah unmasked. They were a rebellious people; they walked in a

to preach and minister to you by such a prelate, who received authority for this purpose from the successor of St. Peter, in the apostolic see of Rome."—"Hence it clearly appears that there is, and can be, no apostolic succession of ministry in the Established Church, more than in the other congregations or societies of Protestants. All their preaching, and ministering, in their several degrees, is performed by mere human authority."—*Ut sup.* 216, 225.

way that was not good ; they provoked God to anger continually ; yet each of them possessed sufficient self-complacency to say to his neighbour : “ Stand by thyself ; come not near to me ; I am holier than thou ! ” Isaiah lxx. 3—5.

Do they say that they are Catholic ? So said the page of prophecy respecting the worshippers of the beast “ whose mouth spake great things and blasphemies.” They are not more generally dispersed throughout the world, than it was predicted his adherents should be : “ power was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations,” Rev. xiii. 4—7.

Do they say that they are Apostolic ? In the days of the apostles “ the mystery of iniquity did already work.” Even then were there many anti-christs ! 2 Thess. ii. 2. 1 John ii. 18. The claims on which they rest then have been made, or might have been made, by men on whose foreheads the stamp of infamy is fixed by the unerring hand of the Almighty.

But if they still contend that it is by such tests the question must be determined, we will not hesitate to deny that the church of Rome possesses these attributes, however tenaciously it may claim them. It is in vain for them to pretend that its history exhibits these qualities, till all ecclesiastical records are burnt, and the memory of man has ceased to do its office. Have not religious disputes, in repeated instances, armed one half of the popedom against the other ? If they will tell us, for example, in what the unity of the church consisted in the days of Urban the Sixth and Clement the Seventh, when pope appeared against pope, and excommunication was exchanged for

excommunication ; if they will prove that there was never any alienation of heart between the Dominicans and the Franciscans ; and that Scottists and Thomists, Jansenists and Jesuits have always taught the same doctrines ; we shall be able to show, on similar principles, that protestant churches may also boast their unity.*

We do however maintain that the church of Jesus Christ, in the strictest signification of the phrase, possesses all these attributes. But then we do not mean by this expression exclusively any one of those communities distinguished among men as churches, but truly pious persons of every degree, to whatever denomination of professors they may belong. Not papists or protestants ; not adherents to the English establishment, or dissenters from its communion, considered as such ; but all of every class who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. We call that man a Christian who receives Jesus of Nazareth as his Mediator, his Instructor, and his Lord, if his faith is operative to cleanse his heart, and regulate his life. Whatever be the name of his sect, or the form of his worship, in such a man we recognize a member of that church which our Redeemer "cherishes" by his grace, which he "has purchased with his blood," and which he has "sanctified and cleansed, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." This church must be Catholic, or universal, and this church alone can be so, as it comprehends "all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."

* Copious illustrations of this subject may be found in Edgar's "Variations of Popery."

This church is One. The rites practised by its members may differ ; the garb of its ministers may vary ; and mistakes relating both to doctrine and duty may attach to all. But whatever dissimilarity may be found in their opinions or customs, all possessors of genuine godliness are one in spirit. The object of their faith is the same ; they all believe in Jesus the only begotten of the Father, rely on his sacrifice, and expect from his hands the crown of glory. The object of their love is the same ; the excellences of Him who once died on Calvary, but now reigns in heaven, charm their bosoms, and excite in their hearts the most powerful emotions of esteem and gratitude. The object of their pursuit is the same ; to glorify God, by obeying his laws, and acquiring his likeness, is the business of their lives. They constitute but one army, though divided into several regiments : different systems of tactics may be seen in their minor movements ; occasional disputes among their leaders may impede the progress of their arms ; but all are opposing the reign of evil, under the banners of the Lord of hosts ; and sincerely seeking the honour of his crown, and the extension of his empire.

This church is also Holy ; no unsanctified individual belongs to it. A wicked man may associate with its members ; his appearances of piety may deceive them ; he may be recognized as a brother. Counterfeit coin may be mingled with the true, but the coin of the realm is real gold. It is fact, that the motives of some who have espoused the cause of truth would not bear to be scrutinized, and that their conduct did not correspond with their profession. But though the zeal of Jehu was not pure, the idolatries which had prevailed under

the house of Ahab, which he was the means of removing, are not on that account to be justified. Good principles must not be rejected, because bad men have sometimes found it politic to patronize them.

This church is Apostolic. The apostles belonged to it themselves; they laid the foundations on which it is established. And as to visible churches, or communities of professed Christians, we cannot but think that church is most apostolic, which coincides most fully with the doctrinal and practical instructions contained in the apostolic letters; and exhibits most evidently that spirit which the apostles evinced. But can the church of Rome be apostolic? Alas! how little would the apostles know, were they now to return to the earth, of its tenets, its rites, and its officers! Patriarchs and primates, archbishops and cardinals, legates and vicars apostolic, with all the secular and regular clergy, presenting themselves before Peter and John, would find it difficult to teach them the gradation of their ranks, and the limits of their jurisdiction.

The arguments adduced by the Romish clergy to prove their inherent right to regulate our belief, appear then to us, to be incorrect in principle, and inapplicable in fact. Uninspired men could possess no such authority, were the church in which they ministered as pure as that at Ephesus in its brightest days. And the church of Rome, far from being identical with the living church of Christ, in our apprehension betrays conspicuous tokens of putrefaction. For if a community, professedly Christian, can ever become dead, corrupt, and pestilential; it must assuredly be so, when it

substitutes the dogmas of men for the doctrines of Christ; when it dispenses with his authority, and sets up in his stead a Lord of its own creation; when it is proud and uncharitable, ambitious and greedy of wealth, "arrayed in purple and scarlet," "decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls;" and "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

The third of those fundamental principles on which this system is built, is the supremacy of the bishop of Rome over all other ministers, and over all Christian people.

The exaction of universal obedience to the sovereign pontiff is founded on these three positions: the first, that our Lord gave to Peter supremacy over the other apostles; the second, that Peter afterwards became the Bishop of Rome; the third, that his authority descends from him to his successors in that city.*

* "I acknowledge the holy catholic and apostolical Roman church, the mother and mistress of all churches; and I promise and swear true obedience to the Roman bishop, the successor of St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, and vicar of Jesus Christ."—*Creed of Pope Pius IV.*

"Within the first century from the birth of Christ, this long-expected Messiah founded the kingdom of his holy church in Judea, and chose his apostles to propagate it throughout the earth, over whom he appointed Simon as the centre of union and head pastor; charging him to feed his whole flock, sheep as well as lambs, giving him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and changing his name into that of Peter or Rock: adding, 'on this Rock I will build my church.' Thus dignified, St. Peter first established his see at Antioch, the head city of Asia, whence he sent his disciple St. Mark to establish and govern the see of Alexandria, the head city of Africa. He afterwards removed his own see to Rome, the capital

If sufficient evidence cannot be adduced to show the truth of each of these ideas, the claim of the pope to govern the church as vicegerent of Christ, must fall to the ground. It is not enough that one, or even two of them should be established; all must be proved, or an essential link will be wanting. It is not, therefore, because we are driven to it by necessity, that we say we cannot admit any one of the three. Any two of them we might concede, and yet justify our independence; but the love of truth compels us to reject them all.

That Peter was accustomed to take the lead among the disciples we readily grant. His natural fervour and promptitude placed him at the head of the little band, and he might on various accounts be denominated "the first." But there is no evidence that he was endowed with any authority over his brethren. The power of binding and loosing

of Europe and the world. Here, having, with St. Paul, sealed the gospel with his blood, he transmitted his prerogative to St. Linus, from whom it descended in succession to St. Cletus and St. Clement."—*End of Controversy*, p. 206.

"All antiquity supports us in the belief, that our blessed Saviour gave to St. Peter a headship and primacy over his church, and that it was continued through the following ages, in the persons of his successors, the bishops of Rome.

"We find these exercising acts of decided authority over the highest dignitaries of the eastern church; we see them acknowledged as supreme, by the most learned fathers; we have recorded, in strong terms, the deference and submission even of general councils to their decisions and decrees. And if all this suffice not to prove the belief of those ages in the papal supremacy, I know not how we can ever arrive at a knowledge of what they held on any subject."—*Dr. Wiseman's Lectures*, vol. i. p. 285.

in earth and in heaven, was equally given to them all, Matt. xviii. 18. A promise similar in its nature was made to ten of the apostles after the resurrection of their Lord, when Jesus said, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you," breathed on them, and added, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained," John xx. 21—23. It is true, that on one occasion, Jesus said to Peter individually, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xvi. 19. But as this was spoken in reply to what Peter had previously said, there is nothing in this circumstance to prove that the power confided to him was different from that bestowed on his colleagues; especially as afterwards language of similar signification was addressed to them generally. The rock on which the Redeemer declared he would build his church, is by no means so naturally interpreted of Peter, as of the confession which Peter made, "thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" a confession which expresses the faith of every Christian, and which the gates of hell, the policy and power of the infernal conspirators, have never been able to subvert.

But whatever might be the nature of Peter's pre-eminence, there is no reason to believe that he was bishop of Rome. If the testimony of those ancient writers be received, whose declarations are our only evidence that he ever was in that city, he was put to death there in the twelfth year of Nero; can we then suppose that the apostle of the circumcision, several years before the destruction of Jerusalem, settled as bishop of a gentile city?

The church at Rome was founded long before this time ; and certainly Peter was not its bishop, either when Paul wrote to it in the fourth year of Nero, or when he visited it as a prisoner, in the seventh.

But even had Peter sustained this office, how slender would have been the pretence afforded to his successor at Rome, to claim authority over the venerable apostle John, who lived thirty years after the martyrdom of Peter, or to exercise any supremacy which Peter may be supposed to have possessed over his fellow-disciples ! Yet, on this quicksand, are those extravagant pretensions founded, which have enabled the chief ecclesiastic at Rome, and his immediate coadjutors, not only to tyrannize over other professed ministers of Christ, but also to trample on the rights of sovereign princes. Thus has he been enabled to “exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”*

* The allegations of Dr. Wiseman referred to in a previous note respecting the universal acknowledgment of the Pope’s supremacy in the primitive ages, are fully met by Dr. Clagett, in a learned work which first issued from the press in 1687, and is now in course of republication. Fifteen eminent writers, among whom were several bishops of the established church, united in this production ; which is entitled Cardinal Bellarmine’s Notes of the Church Examined and Confuted. The following sentences are fully to the point :

“ On the other side, it appears, by most unquestionable evidence, that the primitive fathers knew no greater necessity of being united to the Roman, than to any other catholic or orthodox bishop. When Pope Victor took upon him to excommunicate the Arian churches, for not observing Easter as the Roman did, they were so far from thinking a union with him as their head necessary to their being members of the catholic church, that they called a

These are the leading principles of the Romish system, a system, the basis of which is an unfounded opinion that the revelation which God has

synod of their own, reprehended the pope's arrogance, and resolved to adhere to their own custom. St. Cyprian, Firmilian, and the Africans, did the like, in opposition to Pope Stephen; Firmilian plainly telling them, that while he thought to excommunicate all them from himself, he had but excommunicated himself from them. In ancient times there was no shadow of any such headship in the pope, as of late ages has been contended for. He was treated with no other titles of respect than other bishops were, who were called Popes and Vicars of Christ no less than he, as he was by them styled their colleague and brother, no less than they by him. In respect of presidency over particular churches, his jurisdiction was confined as well as theirs; in respect of the common care of the whole church, each of them was deemed to have an authority and a trust no way inferior to his; all which our adversaries do full well understand, who are, though ever so little, conversant in St. Cyprian, if they would but speak what they know. But because St. Jerome's complaint to Damasus is insisted upon by the Cardinal, let St. Jerome be heard speaking to this very point so clearly that we cannot desire he should have been more express: "Wherever," saith he, "there is a bishop, whether at Rome, or at Eugubium, or Constantinople, or Rhegium, or Alexandria, or Thanis; he is of the same worth, and of the same priesthood. The advantage of wealth, and the disadvantage of poverty, does not make a bishop to be higher or lower; but they are all successors of the apostles." "Pope Leo indeed speaks a little more to the purpose," (than a passage cited from Augustine) "but without any authority, as being a witness in his own cause. For it was but a few years before that Zosimus, Boniface, and Celestin, had set up a small pretence to a universal headship, though nothing was got by it, but a notable rebuke from the African fathers, of whom St. Augustine was one, for introducing a worldly pride into the church. But no wonder if those popes that followed, still kept their eye upon that power which their predecessors could not as yet compass."

mercifully given is insufficient to guide us ; which demands the prostration of our intellect before the decisions of fallible mortals ; and which represents the whole church of God as under the superintendence of one who can produce no credentials from heaven to enforce our submission. Such a system usurping the place of New Testament religion, may well be characterized as an “ apostasy ; ” “ a falling away.” Its representative who sits at Rome, opposing the authority, and doctrine, and spirit of Christ, may be termed without injustice “ the Man of Sin ; ” the resemblance of whose conduct to that of Judas, who in the guise of a friend betrayed his Master, may well entitle him to the appellation which Judas received, “ the Son of Perdition ; ” who taking his seat in the Christian church, and assuming dominion over the consciences of all, arrogates to himself that homage which belongs exclusively to the Most High ; “ who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped ; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”

Let every professed protestant then be careful to act consistently with his profession, and to make use of those advantages with which he is favoured. He acknowledges that the Scriptures are able to make us “ wise unto salvation.” But, in order to this, they must be read ; they must be understood ; they must be believed. Let us not content ourselves with knowing that a Bible is in our possession ; let us peruse its holy pages ; let us treasure up its dictates in our memory ; let them be our continual study. With docility let us receive them, for “ these are the true sayings of God.” And,

conscious of liability to err, through the weakness of our faculties, and the prejudices with which sin has darkened every human mind, let us look up to Him by whom they were indited, begging him to impart "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe."

Do we acknowledge that the church of Christ consists of all who truly love him, believing the testimony concerning him, which is given in the volume of truth, then let us be anxious to be found ourselves in that happy number. Be not satisfied with any thing short of that acquaintance with him, which produces the entire surrender of body and spirit to his care and control. Without this, by whatever name you may be called, or however highly you may be esteemed among your religious friends, you are not such Christians as the Lord of glory will confess, at the day of judgment. Contemplate his character; is he not worthy of your love? Contemplate his deeds; is he not worthy of your confidence? Contemplate the offices he sustains; is he not adapted to your wants? He is able to save you from sin and from ignorance, from guilt and from ruin. He invites those who labour and are heavy laden to come to him for rest. Listen to his voice; receive him as your Saviour.

Do we disclaim all allegiance to that imperious mortal, the pope, who demands submission to his mandates, from all the servants of Jehovah? Let us remember that we have not received liberty

that we might be lawless, but are under the law to Christ. To his authority we are bound unservedly to submit. By his commands we are to regulate our conduct, seeking his approbation, as our best reward. "If you continue in his word, then are you his disciples indeed."

LECTURE II.

ON ITS WORSHIP AND AUTHORIZED CUSTOMS.

“For, laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups; and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.”—*Mark* vii. 8, 9.

If it were not important on any other account that we should be acquainted with the rites and customs of the Romish church, this one fact would render it desirable that they should be known, that they display the consequences which naturally result from once admitting that the Scriptures are insufficient to be the Christian rule of faith and practice. This principle has been represented as the basis of that system which is denominated Popery, it being the fundamental tenet of the church of Rome, that tradition must be joined with the written word of God, to constitute our rule, and that the meaning of the whole must be determined, not according to the individual judgment of the inquirer, but according to the interpretation given by the clergy of that church.

It may, perhaps, be thought by some, that the importance of this error cannot be very great. Some may be ready to say, that it will amount to nearly the same thing, whether we take Scripture alone

as our rule, or Scripture in conjunction with tradition, and interpreted by the general voice. In all probability, the current traditions will not differ much from the inspired record; and the interpretation given by a large number of learned men will not be very dissimilar from that which would be given by a judicious individual. Nothing is better calculated to produce conviction of the fallacy of this idea, and of the importance of forming our religious views from the Scriptures alone, than to show how far this principle has actually carried others. The view we are now about to take of the worship and authorized customs of the Romish church, should demonstrate to every candid mind, that such a deviation from the standard of truth is sufficiently great to nullify the whole counsel of God; for to the Romish doctors now, it may be said, as correctly as to the Jewish doctors formerly, "In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Ye make the word of God of none effect through your tradition which ye have delivered."

But we need not be surprised, if we find on examination, that through the influence of this principle, the worship and customs of the church of Rome differ widely from what the New Testament prescribes. For what is tradition, but report? report handed down from age to age, without written memorials? The true question between protestants and papists is, whether the evidence of report will bear to be set in competition with the evidence furnished by documents? We all know how little dependence is to be placed on report, even when it relates to the events of the current month. A story soon becomes inaccurate, when verbally

transmitted. Hearsay evidence is on this account wisely rejected in our courts of justice ; a man is only permitted to depose to what he himself has seen or heard. The tale that passes through the lips of different narrators, receives a tinge from the prejudices of each. The love of the marvellous causes one to heighten an occurrence that is somewhat extraordinary. The love of scandal causes a second to aggravate that part of the case which wears the most censurable aspect. The love of hypothesis induces a third to suppress a particular which accords not with his favourite system. This suppression produces a want of connexion, which the next narrator supplies from his own imagination, to make the account complete. The newly invented part is made by another person the principal feature of the story ; and thus in the end, the history received bears not the slightest resemblance to that from which it sprang.

And it is easy to perceive that these traditions were especially liable to be affected by the partialities or interests of those through whom they were transmitted. When the question was, What were the doctrines and practices of the apostles ? and the appeal was made to report, official persons were peculiarly likely to give a corrupted version. If a teacher of Christianity were smitten with the love of power, (which there is too much reason to believe that many teachers of Christianity were, even in early times,) he would tell that tradition which seemed to give authority to the minister, but would be likely to leave untold that which had the contrary tendency. If he were not thoroughly conscientious, he would not be very scrupulous about the source from whence a tradition came, if it

sued his own purpose ; but would be hard to believe a narrative authentic, that opposed his views. If his chief aim were popularity and human applause, the purity of Christian rites would be greatly endangered ; under pretence of relieving their naked simplicity, and imparting to them additional solemnity and splendour, traditions would be eagerly sought, and zealously enforced, the observance of which in worship was adapted to excite the imagination, to inflame the passions, and to please the worldly-minded.

As to the decisions of synods and general councils, it does not require much knowledge of human nature to discern, that influence of a kind quite distinct from the simple love of truth, would sometimes be felt by members of such assemblies. Attachment to a party, or friendship for an advocate, desire to please a prince, or fear of offending a powerful ecclesiastic, would operate more strongly on many voters, than they themselves were aware of ; and would materially lessen the value of the decrees they issued for general observance. Decisions formed in circumstances very trying to the integrity of those from whom they proceeded, have, however, become the standard of orthodoxy, to those who prefer "the judgment of the Church" to the unsophisticated dictates of the inspired volume.

It seemed almost necessary to make some such observations as these, to render the accounts credible, which we shall have to give of the ceremonies practised in the Romish church ; so widely do its rites and institutions differ from the appointments of the Redeemer and his apostles.

Observe, then, in the first place, that the public

services of the church are constantly conducted in a language not understood by the congregation. The prayers of the Romish church are only recited in the Roman language. A sermon or exhortation, indeed, is frequently delivered in sounds which have meaning in the ears of those to whom it is addressed; but the prayers and the praises, all that strictly speaking constitutes the worship, is in Latin. In Ireland, in England, in France, in Spain, in India, and in South America, the offices of the church are conducted in Latin!

Now, what degree of devotion is to be expected from men who worship in an unknown tongue? Suppose the service to be intrinsically excellent; suppose that every line is adapted to excite devotional feelings in the mind of him who comprehends its meaning; still the effect must be entirely lost, if the signification of the terms by which it should be conveyed to his heart, is a secret to the worshipper. It is true, that in England, there is in existence an English version of the missal, the vespers, the tenebræ, and some other offices, professedly drawn up and published for the use of the laity. But the public recital of the service is still in Latin; and though to a man who does not understand the words he hears, it is a great advantage to have before him words of similar meaning in his native tongue, the impression thus indirectly produced can be but small. And of what use can such a translation be to those who cannot read? How, for example, are the Irish peasantry to avail themselves of its assistance? The very persons who most need instruction and guidance in their prayers, the most ignorant classes of the inhabitants of popish countries, are left quite destitute of

help to direct their aspirations to the Creator. Even in the sanctuary, they may gaze and wonder, but they understand not !

It may be naturally asked, what reasons are assigned for this extraordinary deviation from all that appears rational. The answer is, that Latin was originally the prevailing language in Christendom, so that where it is not understood, it is not the church that has introduced a foreign language among the people, but it is the people who have forgotten their ancient language; that Latin is vernacular in some parts of Europe, and is so similar to the languages of France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, that where these languages are understood, no inconvenience can be occasioned by its adoption; and that it is taught in other places ! Ladies of polite education will hear with astonishment that they can understand what is recited before them in Latin, because they are acquainted with French or Italian. Yet this is asserted by a bishop of the Romish church as an apology for the conduct of himself and his brethren who conduct the public worship of God in the language of ancient Rome ! These are his words,—words written in English, and printed for general perusal ! “The Latin language is vernacular in Hungary, and the neighbouring countries; it is taught in all the catholic settlements of the universe, and it approaches so near to the Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and French, as to be understood, in a general kind of way, by those who use these several languages.”

Can these gentlemen wonder if protestants esteem such allegations unsatisfactory, and endeavour to account for the practice in some other

way? Can they wonder if they hear us remark, that secret incantations, consisting of unintelligible sounds, are performed by professors of sorcery, in order to strike the credulous applicant with superstitious awe? Can they complain, with justice, if we remind them that the performance of worship in a dead language was adapted to give them ascendancy over the ignorant at first, and tends to preserve it now, and that if the Bible is taken away from the layman, and the authorized prayers of the church are given to him in a language that he cannot read, his dependence on the clergy becomes complete, and the priest is made a daily necessary of life? Could they be surprised, if any of our people were to say to theirs, "Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship!" Are not they teaching men to honour God "with their lips," rather than with their hearts? "I had rather speak five words in the church, with my meaning understood,* that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

Secondly: Much of the worship of the Romish church is addressed to creatures, rather than to the Creator. Praises and prayers are offered to men long since dead, but canonized by the sovereign pontiff.

The advocates of popery are accustomed to charge protestant writers with misrepresentations of their doctrine and practice on this point. The fact itself they cannot deny, but they say they render supreme homage to God only. They pray to God, they tell us, to bestow good things upon them;

* See Macknight and Boothroyd, on 1 Cor. xiv. 19.

they pray to saints to intercede with God on their behalf, and thus procure the desired boon.* There is a distinction, and we shall do well to keep it in mind; but were we to admit the truth of these representations in their fullest extent, these charges would still remain,—that their practice is adapted to wean the mind from God, and lead them to transfer to others that love, and confidence, and

* “Let us now hear what is the genuine doctrine of the catholic church in this article, as solemnly defined by the pope, and nearly three hundred prelates of different nations, at the council of Trent, in the face of the whole world; it is simply this, that ‘the saints reigning with Christ offer up their prayers to God for men; that it is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, help, and assistance, to obtain favours from God, through his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alone our Redeemer and Saviour.’ Hence the catechism of the council of Trent, published in virtue of its decree, by order of Pope Pius V., teaches that God and the saints are not to be prayed to in the same manner; for we pray to God that he himself would give us good things, and deliver us from evil things; but we beg of the saints, because they are pleasing to God, that they would be our advocates, and obtain from God what we stand in need of.”—*End of Religious Controversy*, p. 248.

To a protestant mind, however, it is difficult to reconcile with these representations, many expressions which Romanists are accustomed to use; and we cannot admit that any such distinction is felt or observed by the illiterate papist, when he prostrates himself before a venerated image, or calls on St. Patrick or St. Winifrede to deliver him from his distresses. Louis XVIII. does not seem to have observed it very accurately when he prayed thus at the baptism of the infant duke of Bourdeaux: “Let us invoke for him the protection of the mother of God, the queen of the angels; let us implore her to watch over his days, and remove far from his cradle the misfortunes with which it has pleased Providence to afflict his relatives, and to conduct him by a less rugged path than I have had to eternal felicity.”

gratitude, which he alone deserves ; that it ascribes to creatures the exercise of illustrious attributes which belong exclusively to Deity ; and that it is neither sanctioned by the command of the Most High, nor the example of inspired men. If the assistance of a saint be implored in those offices of the church which are intended for universal use, do they not ascribe to this dead man the faculty of hearing prayer offered to him at the same time by suppliants in the four different quarters of the globe, and virtually attribute to him greater compassion than to the really omnipresent and omnipotent Creator ? If in the most solemn exercises of public devotion, oblations are offered to the honour of departed saints ; if confession of sin is professedly made to them ; and if petitions are addressed to their clemency, is not God defrauded of that religious homage which is due to him alone ?

In the Roman missal, as published for the use of the English laity, containing the masses appointed to be said throughout the year, abundant proof may be found of these unhallowed practices. In the ordinary of the mass, the recipient says, “ I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary, ever a virgin, to blessed Michael the archangel, to blessed John Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, to all the saints, and to you, father, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore I beseech the blessed Mary, ever a virgin, blessed Michael the archangel, blessed John Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and all the saints, and you, O father, to pray to the Lord our God for me.” Here

confession is made not only to the priest who is present, but to absent saints and angels, as though they participated in those perfections, the possession of which enabled the adorable Emmanuel to say, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Afterwards, the priest, bowing before the middle of the altar, says, "Receive, O holy Trinity, this oblation which we make to thee in memory of the passion, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in honour of the blessed Mary, ever a virgin, of blessed John Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and of all the saints: that it may be available to their honour and our salvation; and may they vouchsafe to intercede for us in heaven, whose memory we celebrate on earth. Through the same Christ our Lord."

Among the "Votive Masses of the blessed Virgin Mary," these expressions of adoration occur: "Hail! holy mother, who didst bring forth the King who reigns over heaven and earth for evermore." "Thou art blessed and worthy of our respects, O Mary, the virgin, who without prejudice to thy virginity, didst become the mother of our Saviour. O virgin-mother of God! he whom the whole world cannot contain, became man and was shut up in thy womb." "Thou art truly happy, O sacred virgin Mary, and most worthy of praise; for out of thee arose the Sun of righteousness, Christ our God." "Blessed art thou, O virgin Mary, who didst bear the Creator of all things: thou didst bring forth him who made thee, and remainest a virgin for ever." After the reception of the eucharist, it is added, "Having received, O Lord, what is to advance our salvation, grant

we may always be protected by the patronage of blessed Mary, ever a virgin, in whose honour we have offered this sacrifice to thy Majesty." "Rejoice, O virgin Mary, thou alone hast destroyed all heresies. Who didst believe the words of Gabriel the archangel. Whilst a virgin, thou didst bring forth him that was God and man; and after childbirth didst remain a pure virgin."

The degree of religious confidence placed in saints, and especially in the mother of our Lord, may be seen in their sermons, as well as in their prayers. A sermon by the Abbé Papillon, delivered in the chapel royal of France, in London, which the leading clergy of the papists have thought it expedient to publish, commences thus: "Mary glorified God most holily in her mortal life, and now God glorifies her magnificently, placing her throne at the side of that of her Son, and above those of the cherubim and seraphim. Assembled, my brethren, to celebrate the great festival of her glorious assumption into heaven, the most solemn of all those which the Church celebrates in honour of the blessed virgin, let us fix our attention, and partake, as much as our weakness will permit, in the lively joy caused in the celestial habitation on her triumphal entry; but let us not confine ourselves to a barren devotion; let us ask ourselves what it was that merited for Mary so high a degree of grandeur and sublimity? Was it principally her firm faith, her virginal purity, or her ardent love? No. What was it, then, that most influenced the choice of the Almighty, in decorating her so splendidly? It was that rare virtue by which man, being displeasing to himself, becomes infinitely pleasing to God,—humility. If

we would, my dear brethren, raise with solidity the edifice of our sanctification, let us lay it on the foundation of humility, without which the building will not stand; let us dig as deep as we can into our interior, in order that it may deeply cast its roots; let us on this beautiful day obtain it of God by the pressing entreaties of Mary, for she is the mother of God, and our mother. As mother of God, she can do much with him; and as our mother, she can do much in our favour. Let us, then, on this great day, place ourselves under her special protection; and after having offered this short homage, so legitimately due to the queen of angels, let us continue the subject we began some weeks ago, touching the sinner's delay of conversion."

How terrible does it seem to be summoned into eternity in the immediate exercise of such delusive feelings! You will not hear, I am persuaded, without emotions of awe, that before the preacher had arrived at the conclusion of his discourse, he suddenly sunk down and died! It is not for us to determine the reception his spirit met with in that mysterious state, the secrets of which God has wisely veiled in impenetrable darkness. May we, when called from earthly scenes, be found under the influence of more exalted hopes than any arising from the power of Mary, and interested in better intercession than "her pressing entreaties." Speaking of an impenitent sinner, the preacher had said, "In this deplorable blindness he thus passes his days, leaving, at his death, his coffers full of gold, and himself devoid of the gold of that charity which alone has currency in the future life. Without thinking of it, he passes into eternity!

After having pronounced those awful words," adds the narrator, "the venerable preacher sunk down, and cast a profound sigh; he was instantly carried into the sacristy, and expired while the sacrament of extreme unction was administering to him."*

Thirdly: The worship offered to God in the Romish church, is offered in the name of intercessors whom he has not authorized; and in dependence on the merits of sinful mortals.

The Scriptures tell us, that "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." But as though God were reluctant to bless, and slow to fulfil his promises, all heaven is to be invoked, according to this system, to plead with Him whose compassions are infinite. A few specimens will illustrate the nature of that advocacy upon which the disciples of Rome are taught to rely, and the manner in which it is pleaded.

In the service to be performed on the day dedicated to St. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, you are directed to use this language: "O God, who hast translated the blessed Dunstan, thy high-priest, to thy heavenly kingdom, grant that we, by his glorious merits, may pass from hence to never-ending joys. Through ——. Receive, we beseech thee, O Lord, the offerings thy suppliant servants lay before thee, on this solemnity of blessed Dunstan, thy confessor and bishop, requesting that, under his blessed patronage, they may be delivered from the snares of their enemies. Through ——. Assist us, O Lord, by the prayers of blessed Dunstan, thy confessor and bishop, in

* "The Laity's Directory to the Church Service, for the year of our Lord 1825. Published with the authority of the vicars apostolic in England."

whose veneration we have partaken of thy sacraments. Through ——."

There is a day dedicated to the translation of the relics of St. Thomas à Becket; on that day the people are instructed to plead his excellences before the Almighty, thus: "O God, who grantest us to celebrate the translation of the relics of the blessed Thomas, thy martyr and bishop; we humbly beseech thee that by his merits and prayers, we may pass from vice to virtue, and from the prison of his flesh to an eternal kingdom. O God, who translated blessed Thomas, thy martyr and bishop, from temporal sufferings to eternal joys, grant, we beseech thee, that we who celebrate his festival, may, by his patronage, pass to the joys of heaven. Through ——."

The "worshipping of angels" may be illustrated by the following sentences from the service appointed for the day of the dedication of St. Michael. "Holy Michael, the archangel, defend us in the battle: that we may not perish in the dreadful judgment. Alleluia, Alleluia. The sea shook, and the earth trembled, when Michael the archangel came down from heaven. Alleluia. We offer thee, O Lord, this sacrifice of praise, that by the intercession of thy angels, thou wouldst mercifully receive the same, and grant that it may avail us unto salvation. Through ——. We humbly beseech thee, O Lord, that being assisted by the intercession of blessed Michael, thy archangel, we may receive in spirit, what we have received in our mouths. Through ——."

The extent to which dependence on the intercession of saints and angels is carried, and the degree in which it occupies the attention of the

worshipper, will however appear most fully from a part of "the Litanies." This portion of the service is in the "Missal for the use of the Laity," left untranslated. Why this distinction is made is not stated; but such prayers are on the whole as beneficial to the laity in Latin, as they would be in English. It begins thus: "O Lord, have mercy upon us. O Christ, have mercy upon us. O Lord, have mercy upon us. O Christ, hear us. O Christ, hearken to us. O God, the Father of heaven, have mercy upon us. O God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us. O God the Holy Spirit, have mercy upon us. Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy upon us. Holy Mary, pray for us. Holy mother of God, pray for us. Holy virgin of virgins, pray for us. Holy Michael, pray for us. Holy Gabriel, pray for us. Holy Raphael, pray for us. All holy angels and archangels, pray ye for us. All holy orders of blessed spirits, pray ye for us. Holy John the Baptist, pray for us. Holy Joseph, pray for us. All holy patriarchs and prophets, pray ye for us. Holy Peter, pray for us. Holy Paul, pray for us. Holy Andrew, pray for us. Holy James, pray for us. Holy John, pray for us. Holy Thomas, pray for us. Holy James, pray for us. Holy Philip, pray for us. Holy Bartholomew, pray for us. Holy Matthew, pray for us. Holy Simon, pray for us. Holy Thaddeus, pray for us. Holy Mathias, pray for us. Holy Barnabas, pray for us. Holy Luke, pray for us. Holy Mark, pray for us. All holy apostles and evangelists, pray ye for us. All holy disciples of the Lord, pray ye for us. All holy innocents, pray ye for us. Holy Stephen, pray for us. Holy Lawrence, pray for us. Holy

Vincent, pray for us. Holy Fabian and Sebastian, pray ye for us. Holy John and Paul, pray ye for us. Holy Cosma and Damian, pray ye for us. Holy Gervasus and Protasus, pray ye for us. All holy martyrs, pray ye for us. Holy Sylvester, pray for us. Holy Gregory, pray for us. Holy Ambrose, pray for us. Holy Augustine, pray for us. Holy Jerome, pray for us. Holy Martin, pray for us. Holy Nicolas, pray for us. All holy pontiffs and confessors, pray ye for us. All holy doctors, pray ye for us. Holy Anthony, pray for us. Holy Benedict, pray for us. Holy Bernard, pray for us. Holy Dominic, pray for us. Holy Francis, pray for us. All holy priests and Levites, pray ye for us. All holy monks and hermits, pray ye for us. Holy Mary Magdalene, pray for us. Holy Lucy, pray for us. Holy Agnes, pray for us. Holy Cæcilia, pray for us. Holy Agatha, pray for us. Holy Catharine, pray for us. Holy Anastasia, pray for us. All holy virgins and widows, pray ye for us. All holy men and holy women of God, intercede ye for us." If this recital is wearisome, let it be remembered that these are the devotions of many millions of our fellow-men, and the regular services of a community which arrogates to itself the exclusive right of being called the Church of Christ, and which has shed the blood of thousands, for not submitting to its thralldom!

Fourthly. In the Romish church, the appointments of Jesus Christ are perverted from their original design.

Baptism, which was, in apostolic practice, so simple in its mode of administration and in its tendency, is in the practice of the church of Rome

a complicated ceremonial surcharged with mystery. Salt, oil, and consecrated water are some of the materials employed; the remission of "original sin, and of actual guilt however enormous," and a distinctive and indelible impression stamped upon the soul by the performance of the ceremony, are some of the effects said to be produced. The Catechism of the Council of Trent assures us that "the law of baptism, as established by our Lord, extends to all, insomuch that, unless they are regenerated by the grace of baptism, be their parents Christians or infidels, they are born to eternal misery and everlasting destruction." But it affirms, on the other hand, that "it cannot be matter of doubt, that when baptized they receive the mysterious gifts of faith; not that they believe with the formal assent of the mind, but because their incapacity is supplied by the faith of their parents, if the parents possess the true faith; if not, (to use the words of St. Augustine) by that of the universal society of the saints; for they are said with propriety, to be presented for baptism by all those to whom their initiation in that sacred rite was a source of joy, and by whose charity they are united to the communion of the Holy Ghost."

The ordinance of the Lord's supper is actually deified! When the Saviour was about to evince his love to his disciples by laying down his life as a sacrifice for their sins, he set before them bread and wine, and enjoined them to partake, in remembrance of him. After his decease, the apostles observed the injunction, and instructed those who embraced their doctrine to do so likewise, in order, as they expressed it, to "show the Lord's death till he come." Now when the Redeemer presented to

his followers the bread and wine, he said of the one, "this is my body," and of the other, "this is my blood." The principle on which this phraseology was adopted was the same, we apprehend, as that which we ordinarily recognize when we say of a portrait of her Majesty, "this is the Queen," or of a statue of her late revered grandfather, "this is George the Third." In precisely the same way David said of the water drawn from the spring of Bethlehem, which some of his zealous friends had adventurously obtained, "Is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?" 2 Sam. xxiii. 17. The persons to whom our Lord addressed this language could not mistake his meaning; they could not think that he intended to say more than that the bread and the wine were representations of his body and of his blood, as he was at the time seated at the table with them, in health and uninjured. His blood was not yet shed; his body was not yet broken; nothing more could be meant by him, or understood by them, than that these were emblems of himself, as wounded and slain for their salvation. The doctrine of the Romish church, founded professedly on this language, however, is, that by the act of the priest in consecrating the sacred elements, they are literally changed into the Redeemer: that they cease to be bread and wine when the Latin words "*hoc est corpus meum*," have been pronounced, and become the true body and blood of him who died upon the cross. They therefore adore these substances as divine, account their elevation a real sacrifice for sin, and require them to be received, not as representations of the Saviour, but as the Saviour himself. In "The Laity's Directory," a work pub-

lished annually, under the sanction of the highest catholic authorities in this country, there is an address of considerable length, exclusively on this subject. One short extract will show that this doctrine, however absurd, is still avowed, even in protestant countries, and that the utmost importance is still attached to it.

“Is then Jesus Christ himself rendered really present on our altars by the act of consecration? Is he who was immolated and offered on the cross, really offered from our altars to God, under the exterior appearances of bread and wine? Yes: this is the truth, and the fact, no less real than it is sublime and wonderful. This external sacrifice of the mass, in which the body and blood of Christ are really offered, under the appearances of bread and wine, as a constant memorial and continuation of the sacrifice of the cross, from which it differs only in the manner of offering, was instituted by Jesus Christ, who is a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, as an integral and essential part of his new law. It was introduced from the beginning, together with all the other doctrines and institutions of Christ, in all places wherever the apostles and apostolic men established Christianity. It was constantly offered as the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ in all Christian countries throughout the world, from the first establishment of Christianity in them to the time of Luther in the sixteenth century. It is now offered, and has been continually offered, to this time, as the great Christian sacrifice, by all Christian churches of every denomination (except the protestant) who all refer its institution to Christ himself, the Mediator and Sovereign High Priest

of the New Testament. These are facts of the highest certainty.

“ If we are Christians, we are bound to believe and observe all the doctrines, precepts, and institutions of Jesus Christ; for in these Christianity consists. They all rest on the foundation of the same Divine testimony and authority: hence as the doctrine of the real presence was equally taught by Christ as the doctrine of the Trinity; as the sacrifice of the mass was equally revealed and instituted by Christ, as the sacrament of baptism; it is evident that both must be equally believed and admitted by every Christian. He who knowingly denies or rejects one doctrine, or one sacred rite, taught or instituted by Christ, and commanded by him to be believed and observed, destroys the very foundation of Christianity in his soul.”*

Who can wonder that men of education in catholic countries should be prone to infidelity, when the professed ministers of Christ command them thus to disbelieve the testimony of their senses, and teach them to regard Christianity as a system of wild conceits and superstitious observances!†

* This address, which contains some paragraphs of evangelical doctrine, and shows how completely it is possible to neutralize that doctrine by incorporating with it a little human tradition, is signed, “ WILLIAM, Bishop of Halia, Vicar Apostolic in the London District.”—*Laity's Directory for 1825.*

† “ In all popish countries it is the practice to carry the consecrated host in procession through the streets, in order to be administered to sick or dying persons in their own houses; and whoever happens to meet it must fall down on his knees and worship. If in some instances Englishmen are exempted, it is because they are Englishmen, not because they are protestants; and even they are

Fifthly; The church of Rome has many ceremonies, and sanctioned many for which there is no foundation in the God, and which are quite opposed to the Christianity.

We cannot enumerate all these inventions; one or two of them may suffice as a sample of the whole. The first to be mentioned is the practice of offering prayers for the dead.

Jesus Christ when hanging on the cross promised the dying thief, who sought his mercy, that on that day he should be with him in paradise. Paul desired to depart, that he might be with Christ; and felt an exhilarating confidence that he and himself and his beloved brethren should, when "absent from the body," be "present with the Lord." But the doctrine of the Romish clergy is,

expected to show some mark of reverence, such as touching the hat, in honour of the idol.

"On Corpus Christi day, it is the custom to carry the host about in solemn procession in great pomp; and though France be not so thoroughly popish as Spain, Portugal, and Italy, yet all those who reside in the streets through which the procession is to pass, are compelled to decorate their houses, in honour of the idol that is passing by. Now this is nothing less than to compel persons to be guilty of idolatry; for whatever papists themselves may think and believe upon the subject, those who are not papists believe that what they are commanded to honour is not God, but a piece of bread; and to compel them to violate their consciences, by honouring in the smallest degree such an idol, is such direct persecution, that were papists in this country subjected to the tenth part of the hardship, our own protestant population would cry out against it, and they would justly do so, as a proceeding unknown and unwarranted by any principle of genuine Christianity."

Between heaven and hell there is a middle state, where the souls of the greater part of Christians, when they leave the world, there to expiate the guilt. Not pure enough to enter at once into the society of the blessed; not guilty enough to deserve eternal punishment in the bottomless abyss; they enter purgatory—a prison—a place of torment,—in which to be purified by temporary pains, and prepared for the beatific vision. Yet the rigour of their punishment may be mitigated, and the duration of their captivity shortened, through the efficacy of masses said on their behalf on earth. The widow and the orphan, the friend and the neighbour, are conjured therefore to have compassion on the soul of the deceased Romanist; and by contributions to that powerful advocate, the priest, to induce him to present the necessary intercessions.

You would perhaps like to be made acquainted with the nature of the petitions which it is thought expedient to offer for the departed friend. The following sentences are taken from the office prescribed for the day of his death. “O God, whose property it is always to have mercy and to spare, we humbly present our prayers to thee in behalf of the soul of thy servant N. which thou hast this day called out of the world; beseeching thee not to deliver it into the hands of the enemy, nor to forget it for ever; but command it to be received by the holy angels, and to be carried into paradise; that as it believed and hoped in thee, it may be delivered from the pain of hell, and inherit everlasting life. Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory, deliver the souls of all the faithful departed from the flames of hell, and from the deep pit. Deliver them from the

lion's mouth, lest hell swallow them, lest they fall into darkness; and let the standard bearer Saint Michael bring them into the holy light, which thou promisedst of old to Abraham and his posterity. We offer thee, O Lord, a sacrifice of praise and prayers; accept them in behalf of the souls we commemorate this day; and let them pass from death to life." "Have mercy, O Lord, we beseech thee, on the soul of thy servant N. for which we offer this victim of praise, humbly beseeching thy Majesty, that by this propitiatory sacrifice he may arrive at eternal rest."

It is not however supposed that these supplications avail very speedily, for on the third, seventh, or thirtieth day after the decease, the whole is to be repeated, with some slight alterations, and new entreaties added, on behalf of the soul, "that if any stains of the corruptions of this world still stick to it, they may be washed away by thy forgiving mercy." And there is remembrance again made of sins every year. On the anniversary of the decease or burial, a repetition of these rites is prescribed, with importunate requests that the soul "may be admitted to the fellowship of the saints," and "being purified by this sacrifice, may obtain both pardon and eternal rest."*

* Roman Missal, Masses for the Dead.

That this doctrine brings "no small gain to the craftsmen," will be readily perceived, if it be considered that remuneration corresponding with the circumstances is extorted for every mass; and that affectionate relatives, whether rich or poor, when suffering under recent bereavement, will be ready to do their utmost for the relief of the dear deceased. It would be easy to illustrate this idea, by citing some of those narratives which protestant writers on this subject have given, in large abundance;

Many other rites are also practised in their worship, which are destitute of the slightest scriptural authority, the description of which would show still further how completely the precepts of men are substituted for the commandments of God. On the day called Ash Wednesday, for example,

but nothing can show more forcibly the address with which it is reduced to a system, than the rules of "The Purgatorian Society," which was established at Dublin, in the year 1813. The following are some of them:—"Rule 1. That the affairs of this institution shall be regulated by the superior, rectors, and six of the members who compose the Office for the Dead, who shall attend every Wednesday night, at half-past eight o'clock, throughout the year, at the above named place, or any other place which may be hereafter appointed, and there with attention and devotion, recite the Office for the Dead, agreeable to the intention that shall then be mentioned.—Rule 2. That every well-disposed catholic, wishing to contribute to the relief of the suffering souls in purgatory, shall pay one penny per week, which shall be appropriated to the procuring of masses to be offered up for the repose of the souls of the deceased parents, relations, and friends of all the subscribers to the institution in particular, and the faithful departed in general.—Rule 6. That the spiritual benefits of this institution shall be conferred in the following manner, viz. Each subscriber shall be entitled to an Office at the time of their death, another at the expiration of a month, and one at the end of twelve months after their decease, also the benefit of masses which shall be procured to be offered by the money arising from subscriptions, and which shall be extended to their parents, relations, and friends, in the following order, that is to say, their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, and if married, husbands, wives, and children, if they have any departed who lived to maturity." The founders of this society, themselves Romish clergy, represent themselves as inviting all tender-hearted catholics, who have a feeling sensibility of the duty they owe their departed parents, relations and

ashes are applied in the form of a cross to the heads of the faithful, the ashes having been first sprinkled with holy water, and prepared for the operation by the following prayer. "O Almighty and Eternal God, spare those that repent, show

friends, who probably may stand more in need of their commiseration at present, than at any period of their lifetime, to assist in the charitable and pious purpose of shortening the duration of their sufferings by the most easy means imaginable!" By the most easy means imaginable! And what are these? To raise money by a penny a week subscription to procure masses! To procure them from whom? From the clergy! To pay the man who professed during the life of the deceased to be his best friend, his spiritual father, to present prayers for his deliverance from torments; prayers which would be certainly efficacious to mitigate his sufferings, but prayers which he will not offer till he is paid for them! In the same spirit, in various parts of the *Laity's Directory*, donations are solicited for chapels encumbered with debt, and this sort of encouragement held out to contributors: "The benefactors are recommended every Sunday to the prayers of the congregation; and on the first Sunday in the month, mass, with benediction of the blessed sacrament, is offered up for the benefactors of the chapel, both living and dead."—"N.B. The Rev. B. B. engages to offer up the masses of two Sundays every year for the benefactors of this chapel, and likewise four masses in the year for all who lie in the burying ground belonging to it."

Contributors to the London Mission Fund are in like manner assured that "each person becoming a member participates in the benefit of four masses, that are celebrated every week in the Bishop's College for its members and benefactors. Such is the advantage," continues the appeal, "and such the objects that are aimed at by this institution: objects that should induce every catholic who is sincerely attached to the faith of his ancestors, to seize with gladness this opportunity of propitiating the favour of the Almighty, and laying up for himself immortal treasures in heaven."—*Laity's Directory*, 1839.

mercy to those that humbly intreat thee, and vouchsafe to send from heaven thy holy angel to bless and sanctify these ashes, that they may be a wholesome remedy to all who humbly call upon thy holy name, and conscious of their sins accuse themselves, and deplore their crimes in sight of thy Divine Majesty, or humbly and earnestly have recourse to thy sovereign bounty ; and grant, by our calling on thy most holy name, that whoever shall be touched by these ashes for the remission of their sins, may receive health of body and defence of soul. Through ————.”*

One more specimen will suffice to illustrate this part of the subject. On the feast of “the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary,” the following supplications are offered, in the presence of the congregation, for a blessing on candles, an ample assortment of which are brought together to receive the heavenly benediction. “Holy Lord, Father Almighty, and Eternal God, who didst create all things out of nothing, and by the labour of the bees following thy commands, hast brought this liquor to the perfection of wax ; and who on this day didst accomplish the desire of the righteous Simeon, we humbly beseech thee, that by the invocation of thy most holy name, and by the intercession of blessed Mary, ever a virgin, whose festival we this day devoutly celebrate, and by the prayers of all thy saints, thou wouldst vouchsafe to bless and sanctify these candles, for the service of men, and for the good of their bodies and souls in all places ; and that thou wouldst please mercifully to hear from thy holy temple, and from the throne of thy Ma-

* Roman Missal. Ash Wednesday.

jesty, the prayers of this thy people, who desire to carry them in their hands with reverence, and with sacred hymns to praise thy name, and show mercy to all that cry out unto thee, whom thou hast redeemed by the precious blood of thy Son who liveth." After many similar prayers have been offered for a "heavenly benediction" on the candles, "the priest having put incense in the censer, sprinkles the candles with holy water. After fuming them he distributes them to the faithful, who receive them kneeling, first kissing the candle, and then the hand of the priest."*

Besides these things which relate immediately to the worship of the church of Rome, there are many pernicious customs intimately connected with the system; but if I were at this time to enumerate them I should presume too much on your patience.† We cannot now enter upon the inexhaustible topic of sacred relics, the exhibition of which in the churches on the continent, so frequently excites the wonder and risibility of British travellers.‡

* Rom. Missal. Purif. of the B. V. Mary.

† The reader who wishes to investigate more fully the doctrinal and practical system of the Romish church, may find a very comprehensive view of both, derived from authentic sources, in an excellent work by the Rev. J. M. Cramp, an enlarged edition of which has just appeared under the title of "A Text Book of Popery; comprising a brief history of the Council of Trent, and a complete view of Roman Catholic Theology."

‡ Respecting these, the author of *The Protestant* says, (vol. ii. p. 10,) "I have before me a catalogue of some hundreds of relics, which are objects of popish devotion in several churches in France, Spain, and Italy. Many of them are too gross to appear in a modern publication. The least offensive are the arms, fingers, legs and toes of certain saints; and some of them must have had as many

Nor must we stay to speak of the cruel policy which immures in convents and monasteries, thousands of both sexes, who might prove ornaments to society; imposing on them vows of perpetual celibacy, and separating them for ever from their relatives and friends.* Nor can we now describe

limbs as a centipede; for in Flanders, Spain, and France, there are no fewer than eight arms of St. Matthew, which would of course produce forty fingers, and these would enrich as many churches. The author of one catalogue in my possession, assures his readers, that he himself had seen three arms of St. Luke; and he could not tell how many Saint Thomas à Becket had. Such relics are considered the treasure of the churches to which they belong, and in fact they bring no small gain to the church, as great sums are received annually from devout pilgrims, who come hundreds of miles to feast their eyes and warm their devotion by looking upon those limbs which would have been more honoured by being allowed to rest quietly in the earth. These pious relics are solemnly certified to be what they are said to be; and many have proved themselves genuine by most stupendous miracles; all which is piously believed by their devout worshippers."

So recently as December, A. D. 1838, according to the French journals, the bishop of Algiers left Rome to return to his see, carrying with him, from the pope, the extremity of the second toe of the foot of the apostle Philip, beneath whose patronage the cathedral of Algiers is placed, and a parcel of the bones of St. Augustine.

* Illustrations of this demoralizing and distressing system, which cannot be read without the strongest emotion, may be found in the writings of the Rev. Blanco White, formerly chaplain to Ferdinand VII. of Spain, especially in his "Practical and Internal Evidence against Catholicism." Some idea of the extent to which the practice is carried may be formed from the following facts. In 1830 the population of Rome was 144,542; among whom were thirty-five bishops and archbishops, 1490 priests, 1983 monks, and 2390 nuns. In Portugal, in 1822, there were 132 nunneries, with 2980 nuns, 912 pupils and

the nature of those fasts and other corporeal observances, which the Romish church encourages, and in attention to which a considerable part of its boasted sanctity consists. But there is one practice so prominent and so objectionable, that we must not pass over it, the granting of indulgences.

An indulgence is, according to the advocates of the popish system, not what protestants represent it to be. This is stated plainly; and it is almost the only thing said on the subject that is not vague and indistinct. The sale of this sort of ecclesiastical merchandize having been exposed by the reformers of the sixteenth century, and reprobated by their successors, every effort has been made by the adherents of Rome to palliate the abuse, and overwhelm its opponents with charges of misrepresentation. To say that it only affords remission from canonical penance is heresy: that is a proposition uttered by Luther when beginning to grope his way out of the darkness to which he had been accustomed, but which was formally condemned by Leo the Tenth. To say that it is an offer of deliverance from everlasting punishment on the performance of the stipulations on which it is given, is, on the other hand, to declare the man who issues it, an antinomian of the vilest class. It is hard to find a middle path and render it perceptible. That an indulgence is an offer of pardon on certain terms cannot be denied; it is declared

novices, and 1971 servant-women; the number of monasteries was 346, containing 5830 persons. In Spain, in 1826, the number of the clergy was 146,696, among whom were sixty-one archbishops and bishops, 61,327 monks, and 31,400 nuns.

on the face of the instrument. That it is a pardon for all the sins of him who submits to its conditions, is also affirmed so fully in the proposals, that it cannot be said some crimes are too malignant for its potency. Yet we are told, "it is not and does not include the pardon of any sin at all, little or great, past, present, or to come, or the eternal punishment due to it, as all protestants suppose. Hence, if the pardon of sin is mentioned in any indulgence, this means nothing more than the remission of the temporary punishments annexed to such sin."* It is only the remission of temporary punishments then! Certainly it is not! The everlasting punishment was annulled before! The blood of Jesus Christ had sufficient efficacy to relieve from that, when baptism had united the individual to the number of the faithful; but he was exposed to temporary punishment still. It does not then remit all; it only remits that part that was not previously remitted. "The catholic church," says Dr. Milner, "teaches that the same is still the common course of God's mercy and wisdom, in the forgiveness of sins committed after baptism; since she has formally condemned the proposition, that 'every penitent sinner, who, after the grace of justification, obtains the remission of his guilt and eternal punishment, obtains also the remission of all temporal punishment.' The essential guilt and eternal punishment of sin, she declares, can only be expiated by the precious merits of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ; but a certain temporal punishment God reserves for the penitent himself to endure, 'lest the easiness of his pardon should

* End of Religious Controversy, p. 304.

make him careless about relapsing into sin.' Hence satisfaction for this temporal punishment has been instituted by Christ, as a part of the sacrament of penance; and hence a Christian life, as the council has said above, 'ought to be a penitential life.' This council at the same time declares, that this very satisfaction for temporal punishment, is only efficacious through Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, as the promise of Christ to the apostles, St. Peter in particular, and to the successors of the apostles, is unlimited—'whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven;' hence, the church believes and teaches, that her jurisdiction extends to this very satisfaction, so as to be able to remit it wholly or partially, in certain circumstances, by what is called an indulgence."*

Thus, whether the proposed benefit be sold for money or earned by pilgrimages, whether the terms be a crusade against Saracens or a campaign against heretics, the doctrine of indulgences proceeds on the principle, that the pardon granted to the Christian by his adhesion to Jesus Christ is incomplete. It is, we are told, "not barely a relaxation of the canonical penance enjoined by the church, but also an actual remission by God himself, of the whole or part of the temporal punishment due to it in his sight." The salvation which the gospel proclaims to every one that believeth, is, therefore, but partial, without that additional absolution which is to be procured from the Romish clergy; and thus the commission of sin is encouraged by the easy terms on which it is proposed to furnish the remission, not indeed of eternal

* End of Religious Controversy, p. 306.

punishment, but of temporary; the punishment arising from affliction before death and purgatory after it; the only punishment which a faithful catholic has to fear.

A few years ago an indulgence was granted by the reigning pontiff, the terms of which will illustrate yet more fully the nature and operations of this part of the Romish system. It commences thus:—

“Leo Bishop, servant of the servants of God, to all the faithful of Christ who shall see these presents, health and apostolical benediction. In the merciful dispensations of the Lord, it is at length granted to our humility, to announce to you with joy that the period is at hand, when what we regretted was omitted at the commencement of the present century, in consequence of the direful calamities of the times, is to be happily observed according to the established custom of our forefathers; for that most propitious year, entitled to the utmost religious veneration, is approaching, when Christians, from every region of the earth, will resort to this our holy city, and the chair of blessed Peter, and when the most abundant treasures of reconciliation and grace will be offered as means of salvation to all the faithful disposed to perform the exercises of piety which are prescribed. During this year, which we truly call the acceptable time, and the time of salvation, we congratulate you that a favourable occasion is presented, when, after the miserable accumulation of disasters under which we have groaned, we may strive to renew all things in Christ, by the salutary atonement of all Christian people. We have therefore resolved, in virtue of the authority given to us by Heaven, fully to unlock that sacred treasure, composed of the merits, suffer-

ings, and virtues of Christ our Lord, and of his virgin mother, and of all the saints, which the Author of human salvation has intrusted to our dispensation.

“In this it becomes us to magnify the abundant riches of the Divine clemency, by which Christ, preventing us with the blessings of sweetness, so willed the infinite power of his merits to be diffused through the parts of his mystical body, that they, by reciprocal co-operation, and by the most wholesome communication of advantages flowing from faith, which worketh by charity, might mutually assist each other : and by the immense price of the blood of the Lord, and for his sake and virtue, as also by the merits and suffrages of the saints, might gain the remission of the temporal punishment, which the fathers of the Council of Trent have taught is not always entirely remitted, as is the case in baptism, by the sacrament of penance.

“Let the earth, therefore, hear the words of our mouth, and let the whole world joyfully hearken to the voice of the priestly trumpet, sounding forth to God’s people the sacred jubilee. We proclaim that the year of atonement and pardon, of redemption and grace, of remission and indulgence, is arrived ; in which we know that those benefits which the old law, the messenger of things to come, brought every fiftieth year to the Jewish people, are renewed in a much more sacred manner by the accumulation of spiritual blessings through Him by whom came peace and truth. For if the lands that had been sold, and the property that had passed into other hands, were reclaimed in that salutary year, so we recover now, by the infinite liberality of God, the virtues, and merits, and gifts, of which we are

despoiled by sin. If then the claims of human bondage ceased to exist, so at present, by shaking off the most galling yoke of diabolical subjection, we are called to the liberty of God's children, to that liberty which Christ has granted to us. If, in fine, by the precept of the law pecuniary debts were then pardoned to debtors, and they became discharged from every bond, we are also exonerated from a much heavier debt of sins, and are released, by the Divine mercy, from the punishments incurred by them.

“Eagerly wishing that so many and such great advantages may accrue to your souls, and confidently invoking God, the giver of all good gifts, through the bowels of his mercy, in conformity to the exigency of the prescribed period, and the pious institutes of the Roman pontiffs, our predecessors, and walking in their footsteps, we, with the assent of our venerable brethren, the cardinals of the holy Roman church, do, by the authority of Almighty God, and of the blessed apostles, Peter and Paul, and by our own, for the glory of God himself, the exaltation of the catholic church, and the sanctification of all Christian people, ordain and publish the universal and most solemn jubilee, to commence in this holy city from the first vespers of the nativity of our most holy Saviour Jesus Christ next ensuing, and to continue during the whole year, 1825; during which year of the jubilee, we mercifully give and grant in the Lord a plenary indulgence, remission, and pardon of all their sins, to all the faithful of Christ, of both sexes, truly penitent and confessing their sins, and receiving the holy communion, who shall devoutly visit the churches of blessed Peter and Paul, as also of St. John Lateran,

and St. Mary Major, of this city, for thirty successive or uninterrupted (whether natural or ecclesiastical) days, to be counted, to wit, from the first vespers of one day until the evening twilight of the day following, provided they be Romans or inhabitants of this city; but if they be pilgrims or otherwise strangers, if they shall do the same for fifteen days, and shall pour forth their pious prayers to God, for the exaltation of the holy church, the extirpation of heresies, concord of catholic princes, and the safety and tranquillity of Christian people."

There is much more in the same spirit. The pontiff goes on to enact, that if "any on their way should be hindered by sickness or death, they shall not lose their labour, but become partakers of the aforesaid indulgence and remission, as fully as if they had actually visited the said churches on the days appointed." He refutes any objections to the journey drawn from its difficulties or dangers, by arguing that "there is in reserve what will most amply remunerate you for every inconvenience and hardship." He urges the rich augmentation of faith and charity which must arise from a visit to the holy city; the devotional feelings that must be excited in the pilgrim when he comes to prostrate himself before the tombs of Peter and Paul, "and kiss their chains, more precious than gold and gems;" and the impossibility of refraining from tears, when, "perceiving the cradle of Christ, he shall recollect the infant Jesus crying in the manger; or, saluting the sacred instruments of our Lord's passion, shall meditate on the Redeemer of the world hanging on the cross." And then he calls on all patriarchs, primates, archbishops, and bishops, to stimulate their people to the undertaking; and

adds, "to you it belongs to explain with perspicuity the power of indulgences: what is their efficacy, not only in remission of the canonical penance, but also of the temporal punishment due to the Divine justice for past sin; and what succour is afforded out of this heavenly treasure, from the merits of Christ and his saints, to such as have departed real penitents in God's love, yet before they had duly satisfied by fruits worthy of penance for sin of commission and omission, and are now purifying in the fire of purgatory, that an entrance may be opened for them into the eternal country where nothing defiled is admitted."*

* "The Laity's Directory, for 1825." This indulgence, the advantages of which were urged so strenuously in the papal bull, was, however, according to the testimony of Dr. Wiseman, in a pecuniary point of view unproductive. Endeavouring to refute the supposition that indulgences are intended to fill the papal coffers, he says, "I was in Rome when the venerable pontiff, Leo XII., opened and closed the jubilee, or holy year. I saw the myriads of pilgrims who crowded every portion of the city; I noted their tattered raiment and wearied frames; I saw the convents and hospitals filled with them at night, reposing on beds furnished by the charity of the citizens; I saw them at their meals, served by princes and prelates, and by the sovereign pontiff himself;—but wealth poured into the Roman coffers, I saw not. I heard of blessings abundant, and tears of gratitude, which they poured upon our charity as they departed;—but of jewels offered by them to shrines, or gold cast into the bosoms of priests, I heard not. I learnt that the funds of charitable institutions had been exhausted, and heavy debts incurred, by giving them hospitality; and if, after all this, the gain and profit was in favour of our city, it is, that she must have a large treasure of benediction to her account in heaven; for there alone hath she wished her deeds on that occasion to be recorded."—*Lectures*, vol. ii. p. 86. If this representation be literally correct, it appears, that while crowds of hungry

Now, recollect the leading ideas that have just been advanced, and observe the consequences, the dismal consequences, that result from a departure from the Christian rule of faith and practice. See how far the poor papist has been led from every thing resembling the Christianity of the Scriptures, by taking tradition and the interpretation of the church as his spiritual directory. See how completely the unwritten accompaniment has superseded and destroyed the effect of the written document. He recites his supplications, or listens while they are recited by others, in a language which he cannot understand, and which he never expects to acquire. Much of his worship he offers, not to the God that made him, and on whom he is dependent, but to saints or angels, to the mother of our Lord, or to some canonized priest of ancient times. When he approaches his Holy Maker, he does so in the name of sinful mortals like himself, who needed pardoning mercy for their own transgressions, and whom God has never appointed to the mediatorial office. He attends to ceremonial rites, bearing the name of ordinances instituted by Jesus Christ, but perverted from their original design, and debased by superstitious additions. He venerates innumerable fables, he submits to innumerable impositions, he observes innumerable prescripts, but terror still haunts him. When disease oppresses his frame and wastes his spirits, and physicians say that the case is hopeless, he raises his thoughts to heaven, but trembles at the prospect of arrest, and

vagrants availed themselves of the festival, the affluent, the educated, and even the decently attired classes of the Romish community stood aloof from the scene.

long imprisonment in the purgatorial regions. He now sinks so rapidly that it is evident his final change approaches ; but there is a ceremonial for death as well as for life, and the priest is hastened to the bedside to administer extreme unction, that he may be accurately and fully prepared for eternity. He wishes to repeat his entreaties to his relatives to be merciful to his soul, and to implore them not to withhold those subsidies, without the payment of which it is fruitless to expect that the man whom he has called his father, and treated as his friend, will offer potent masses to withdraw his spirit from the gloomy dungeon into which he is entering ; but his weakness increases, his speech fails, the request is inaudible ; he thinks of purgatory, and dies ! And why is all this, but because he feels and acts in a manner consistent with his principles ? He has been taught that the Scriptures are insufficient to guide him in the way of God. He has been taught to bow to human authority in matters of religion : he does so, and this is the result.

Perhaps some may think it possible to hold the principles and yet not go so far in practice. So it is ; but it must be at the expense of consistency. If we practise any religious ceremony, not because it is sanctioned by the Scripture, but because it is sanctioned by wise and holy men ; if we believe any doctrine, not because the word of God declares it, but because it has been usually believed among our religious connexions ; if we consent to surrender our consciences to the control of fellow-mortals, the arguments we must employ to justify this prostration of spirit, are arguments which the advocates of the church of Rome will turn against us, and with which they may batter to the ground

our unfortified tenement. But if we take the Scriptures as our all-sufficient rule ; if we believe what they reveal, observe what they enjoin, and walk according to their guidance, God commands no more, and man has no right to censure. Worshipping God in the spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh, our hearts and lives will be regulated by the dictates of the plainest wisdom, and must be approved by Him by whose Spirit the sacred oracles were inspired, when he shall return to judge assembled generations.

God has appointed one Mediator to stand between himself and guilty men. Our necessities require no more, and no other can be accepted. The blood which Jesus shed on Calvary has made full reconciliation for all the sins of his genuine disciples. He is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him," Heb. v. 9. "By him we all have access by one Spirit unto the Father," Eph. ii. 18.

"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name," Heb. xiii. 15. Ordinances after the commandments and doctrines of men have indeed "a shew of wisdom in will worship and humility, and neglecting of the body," Col. ii. 22; but if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why should ye be subject to them? "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him : rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him."

LECTURE III.

ON ITS TYRANNY.

“I know this, that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.”—*Acts xx. 29.*

THE facts to which we have now to direct our attention are adapted to excite new gratitude to God, for those merciful arrangements of his providence that have freed us from the tyranny by which our forefathers were long enslaved, and under which many millions of our fellow-men are now groaning. Accustomed as English protestants have been from their youth to the enjoyment of religious freedom, they do not sufficiently realize its value. It seems to us so natural, that we forget that it is a privilege; so necessary, that we are ready to consider it a thing of course. But, a little reflection on the character of the papal system will teach us, that if we have reason, when we approach the throne of the Almighty, to thank him for food and raiment, for health and social comforts, we have yet greater cause to acknowledge the distinguishing goodness by which he has exempted us from the cruel bondage which the court of Rome imposes on its votaries, and on all within the sphere of its baneful influence.

Far be it from us to calumniate either the dead or the living, or to excite animosity against any of

our species. But mischief may sometimes be prevented by the exposure of crimes already committed; and when this is the case, such exposure becomes a duty. The welfare of society requires that a witness in a court of justice should faithfully unfold the truth, though his doing so may be injurious to the reputation of the accused. The same principle should lead us, when the evil tendency of any system can be illustrated from facts, to hold up those facts to public notice, that others may be cautioned against its influence. Now, it may be proved that tyranny is a constituent part of the Romish system: not a mere accident,—not a circumstance casually arising; but a consequence of its first principles,—an essential of its nature.

In the first of these lectures, the leading features of popery were represented to be three: The insufficiency of the Scriptures to be the Christian rule of faith and practice; the inherent right of the Romish clergy to supply the deficiency; and the supremacy of the bishop of Rome over all other ministers and all Christian people. The last lecture was intended to illustrate the effects of the first of these principles; by showing in the rites and ceremonies of the Romish church, how far men are likely to depart from an original institute, if they cease to be regulated by written documents, and are guided by reports transmitted from age to age, and the authoritative interpretations of interested men. This lecture will illustrate the second: it will show that the assumption of right to have dominion over the faith of their people, has led the Romish clergy, though professing to be ministers of the Lamb of God, to oppress, to torment, and to destroy.

Take a view of the tyranny of this system, then, in the first place, as operating on its own adherents; and in the second place, as exerting its influence on those who do not acknowledge its authority.

In contemplating it with reference to its own votaries, we shall perceive that despotism was never in any other instance carried so far; that no other slavery was ever so finished,—so systematic. The most tyrannical eastern princes have contented themselves with the homage of the body; but the clergy of the Romish church require the prostration of the soul! Other despots have imperiously controlled the actions of men; but these domineer over thought and feeling.

In order to justify these assertions, remark in the first place, that popery requires belief without evidence, and, in some cases, in opposition to known fact.

An adherent of this system is bound to believe that the books of the Old and New Testaments are of Divine origin, not because he is acquainted with arguments which may be adduced to prove this, but because the Church believes it. He is bound to believe the Messiahship of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and many other things which are clearly taught in the inspired writings; not because he sees that they are taught there, but because the Church believes them. In these instances, the sentiments enforced are true; but to require a man to believe them, while he is ignorant of sufficient evidence of their truth, is tyrannical. But what shall we say of compulsion to believe on the authority of the church, those doctrines of the truth of which the church can have no evidence herself? To what slavery is he reduced who is commanded

to believe a proposition against which he knows many arguments, but for which he knows none; a proposition the reverse of which is testified by his reason and his senses! He sees before him bread and wine; the church confesses that it is bread and wine, and it would be unjustifiable in him to believe any thing else concerning it. The priest recites a form of words: it is now at his peril to believe that it is bread and wine any longer. He may recollect that it was bread and wine, but though no alteration in it is perceptible, he must not think that it is so now. His sight, his smell, his taste, testify that it is bread and wine, but if he believes that it is bread and wine, he is a heretic! What reason, then, has he to believe that it is not bread and wine? Only this: the church teaches that it is not, but that it has become the body and blood of Christ! If, endeavouring to reconcile the required adoration with his own perceptions, he adopts the sentiment of some of the first reformers, and says, it is bread and wine, but Christ is in it as fire is in heated iron, this is not sufficient; he has imbibed an error which he must unreservedly abjure. In opposition to the testimony of his senses, and in opposition to the declaration of Paul, that Christians in the sacred supper "eat the *bread*," 1 Cor. xi. 26—28; the church requires him to believe that what was bread, is bread no longer; but is actually transmuted into the substance of Him who died on the cross, and dwells in heaven.*

* "Our adversaries are perfectly aware, that we firmly believe, as an article of faith, that there is no bread nor wine, but Christ alone, true God, as well as man, present in it."—*End of Religious Controversy*, p. 264.

Nor is it only in matters purely religious that an adherent of the Romish faith must surrender his judgment to the regulation of the clergy. Many of his speculations in philosophy will seem to them to require their control. He may have spent much time in scientific investigations ; but if the result of his inquiries should appear to the priesthood irreconcilable with any article of faith, he must at their mandate renounce his own convictions, and adopt the opinions of men who know nothing of the matter. The well-known history of Galileo may illustrate this truth. Galileo, a man of genius superior to most of his contemporaries, embraced the system of astronomy which is now generally received by scientific men. He thought that the earth moved round the sun, in opposition to the opinion then generally entertained, that the sun moved round the earth. A charge of heresy was therefore brought against him. His sentiments were declared to be incompatible with Christian truth. He accordingly was compelled, in order to save his life, to abjure on his knees the doctrine he had previously maintained, and to swear, among many other things, "I always have believed, and do now believe, and by the aid of God, I will in future believe, every thing which the holy, catholic, and apostolic Roman church doth hold, preach, and teach."

Now it is easy to perceive, that all this arises spontaneously from the fundamental principles to which we have referred. For if it be true that God has constituted the church a living interpreter of his word, and authoritative judge in all religious matters, it naturally follows that its decisions are final. To assign the reasons on which its declara-

tions are founded, may be inconvenient, and must be unnecessary; their production cannot add authority to the determinations of the supreme Arbiter, but may, if not evidently adequate, occasion their propriety to be questioned. He who trusts his own judgment in these circumstances, in preference to the decision of the church, is guilty of rebellion against legitimate authority; and exposes himself to all the punishment which that infallible tribunal may think it expedient to inflict.

Again: The tyranny of the popish system appears in the propensity of its chiefs to withhold from the people the means of knowledge.

It is not surprising that it should have been the uniform policy of the Romish clergy to keep their adherents in great ignorance of religious truth. The less they knew, the less were they likely to detect the fallacy of those pretensions of which they were the victims. With the Scriptures in their hands, they might have contrasted the edifice they were taught to venerate as the church of Christ with the original model contained in the book of inspiration; without them, they would naturally take it for granted that the conformity was exact. Had their acquaintance with the formularies of devotion, and the minutiae of belief, been extensive and accurate; they might have compared one part with another, and questioned the truth of some dogma, or the propriety of some usage. Nothing corresponded so well with the paramount authority of the theological guides, as ignorance and implicit faith on the part of the people.

Hence it has been taught in the plainest terms, by many of their most renowned doctors, that a man may believe, as far as belief is important, not

only without knowledge of the evidence by which the tenet he believes might be sustained, but also without acquaintance with the tenet itself. The implicit faith taught by the schoolmen is consistent with the most perfect ignorance of the thing believed. If he believes that all that the church believes is true, that is sufficient; though he knows not what the articles of its faith are, yet he is to be considered a believer in each of them. Nay, he may believe two contradictory propositions at the same time, the one explicitly, the other implicitly; the one is his own opinion, which he is not aware that the church disbelieves; the other is the faith of the church, with which he is not acquainted, but which is to be reckoned his faith, because he believes that all that the church believes is true.*

* “‘To believe implicitly,’ says Bona, ‘is to believe in general universally all that holy mother church believes; so as to dissent from her in nothing, nor disbelieve any of her articles. And though it be convenient (*licet opportunum sit*) for all not only to believe all the articles implicitly, but even some of them, since the coming of Christ explicitly; yet it is not necessary (*non tamen est necessarium*) for all, especially the common people, to believe them all explicitly. It is proper rather for those who assume the office of teaching and preaching, as they have the cure of souls.’ Further to show the wonderful virtues and efficacy of such a faith, another of the doctors, Gabriel Byel, maintains, that ‘if he who implicitly believes the church, should think, misled by natural reason, that the Father is greater than the Son, and existed before him, or that the three Persons are things locally distinct from one another, or the like, he is not a heretic, nor sins, provided he do not defend his error pertinaciously. For he believes what he does believe, because he thinks that the church believes so, subjecting his opinion to the faith of the church. For though his opinion be erroneous, his

This doctrine has not, indeed, been universally taught by the Romish clergy; but it has been advanced by men of the greatest repute among them, both in the schools and in their writings, and was never censured by any pope or council. And it appears in the body at large in its practical results. It accords with the practice of reciting the public prayers in an unknown language; and with the

opinion is not his faith; nay, his faith, in contradiction to his opinions, is the faith of the church. What is still more, this implicit faith not only defends from heresy and sin, but even constitutes merit in heterodoxy itself, and preserves in that merit one who forms a most heterodox opinion, because he thinks the church believes so.' Thus far Byel. It is then of no consequence what a man's explicit faith may be; he may be an Arian, a Socinian, an Anthropomorphite, a Polytheist, in short, any thing; he cannot err whilst he has an implicit faith in the church. This they give as their explanation of that article of the creed, 'I believe in the holy catholic church;' though agreeably to this interpretation, there should have been no other article in the creed. This point alone supersedes every other, and is the quintessence of all. Implicit faith has been sometimes ludicrously styled *fides carbonaria*, from the noted story of one who examining an ignorant collier on his religious principles, asked him what it was that he believed. He answered, 'I believe what the church believes.' The other rejoined, 'What, then, does the church believe?' He replied readily, 'The church believes what I believe.' The other, desirous if possible to bring him to particulars, once more resumes his inquiry: 'Tell me, then, I pray you, what it is which you and the church both believe.' The only answer the collier could give was, 'Why truly, Sir, the church and I both believe the same thing.' This is implicit faith in perfection, and in the estimation of some celebrated doctors, the sum of necessary and saving knowledge in a Christian."—*Lectures on Ecclesiastical History* by G. Campbell, D.D., Lect. 23.

prevalent opposition to the unrestricted circulation of the book of God.

The systematic manner in which the Romish clergy keep their people in ignorance of all that we are accustomed to urge against the papal system, and of every thing that is adapted to enlighten them respecting its abuses, is perhaps not so generally known, and particularly deserves exposure. When Leo X. excommunicated Luther, he prohibited the perusal of his writings, under the penalty of participation in his punishment. Succeeding pontiffs excommunicated heretics generally, and with them those who read their books. Still the darkness was not sufficiently dense; and therefore Clement VIII. published a decree that all books written by *catholics* since the year 1515, the year in which Luther began to declaim against indulgences,—should undergo a revision; that every thing in them which was not conformable with the doctrine of the church of Rome, should be retrenched, and that such additions should be made as might seem expedient to the correctors. Prohibitory and expurgatory indexes have consequently been issued from time to time, containing catalogues of forbidden authors, forbidden printers, and forbidden books. In these catalogues are prohibited not only the writings of protestants on all religious subjects, but also of divines belonging to the church of Rome, whose works have been deemed unfavourable to its power and practices.*

* The “*Index Librorum Expurgandorum*,” printed at Rome in 1608, has lately been reprinted in Dublin, and may be obtained in London. It consists principally of emendations of the works of Roman catholic writers, and of the fathers. Among the prohibited articles in modern

But ah ! worse than all, it prohibits the holy record ! It forbids the perusal of the Scriptures in modern languages, without the sanction of the clerical authorities ! Yes, blessed volume ! treasury of heavenly knowledge, guide of my feet, consolation of my spirit, mortal men have doomed thee to darkness ! They have taken away the key of knowledge : they entered not in themselves, and them that were entering in they hindered, Luke ii. 52.

Again : Popery tyrannizes over its votaries in demanding of them an exposure of their secret thoughts and actions.

I refer to what is called auricular confession,—the recital which every Roman catholic, male or female, is compelled to make to a priest, of all the sins of which he has been guilty since the last opportunity of the kind, in thought, in word, or in action. When this is done, the priest has power to absolve him ;* and of the advantages of this

catalogues are the works of Bacon, Locke, and Milton, Robertson's History of the Reign of Charles V., Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Lady Morgan's Italy, and Walton's Polyglott Bible. Some of the writings of Fenelon, Pascal, Dupin, Fleury, Bossuet, and even Belarmino, are too free also to be permitted to circulate in Italy. "If any one read or keep any books composed by heretics, or the writings of any author suspected of heresy or false doctrine, he shall instantly incur the sentence of excommunication ; and those who read or keep works interdicted on another account, besides the mortal sin committed, shall be severely punished at the will of the bishops."

* "This church has uniformly taught, that confession and the priest's absolution, where they may be had, are required for the pardon of the penitent sinner, as well as contrition, and a firm purpose of amendment."—*End of Religious Controversy*, p. 299.

sacrament, as it is termed, he is enjoined to avail himself once a year. Frequent confession is encouraged, but annual confession is required; and it cannot be desirable to any sincere Romanist to make the intervals between such exercises long, as he is taught to believe that "the absolution hereupon pronounced is not conditional or declarative only, but absolute and judicial." Never was such an engine devised by other tyrants to rivet chains upon the spirit, to entrap the wary, and to enslave the strong. The sovereign cannot confer with his secretary of state on any project which may be deemed heretical, or which is designed to oppose the exorbitant pretensions of Rome, without exposing himself afterwards to an insidious cross examination, by an emissary of the popedom. The inquirer after truth, if present among us this evening, must confess the occurrence to his spiritual adviser, and submit to such verbal reproof and corporeal chastisement as bigotry might deem it expedient to inflict. The son must reveal the most private discourse with his father, if any part of it appears to him to be criminal in the eye of the church; and the wife must, in many instances, be obliged to make such communications, as necessarily imply the guilt of her husband. Oh what a powerful instrument of despotism is this! Once in the net, escape is almost impossible. Spies on your actions constitute your household; and your own lips are suborned to betray you. The thoughts of your heart are demanded; you must lay bare your bosom, or by concealment incur the guilt of sacrilege. Thus the spiritual tyrant of a little hamlet is put into possession of the secrets of every family, and the imaginations of every heart; and

can turn his knowledge to whatever account his ambition or his cupidity, his passions or his appetites, may dictate. Thus a crafty dependent of the man of Rome may pry into the mysteries of every cabinet, by putting such questions to a superstitious sovereign or privy counsellor, as an adept in the system can ask, and none but an adept would be able to evade.*

* The instructions given in "The Garden of the Soul," a very popular manual of devotion among the Roman catholics of this country, written for their use by the late bishop Challoner, will give you some idea of the manner in which confession is conducted, and the minute and circumstantial nature of the disclosures which are required. "The penitent, kneeling down at the side of his ghostly father, makes the sign of the cross, and asks his blessing: Pray father give me your blessing, for I have sinned. Then he says the 'Confiteor' in Latin, or in English, as far as 'mea culpa,' &c. (through my fault, &c.) After this, he accuses himself of his sins, either according to the order of God's commandments, or such other order as he finds most helpful to his memory, adding after each sin the number of times that he has been guilty of it, and such circumstances as may very considerably aggravate the guilt; but carefully abstaining from such as are impertinent or unnecessary, and from excuses and long narrations." To assist the penitent in preparing for this exercise, he is furnished with "An Examination of Conscience upon the ten commandments," which commences thus: "Have you been guilty of heresy, or disbelief of any article of faith, or of voluntary doubting of any article of faith? How often? And for how long a time? Or have you rashly exposed yourself to the danger of infidelity, by reading bad books, or keeping wicked company? How often? Have you by word or deed denied your religion, or gone to the churches or meetings of heretics, so as to join with them in any way in their worship? Or to give scandal? How often?" On the command to remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy, the questions are as follows: "Have you neglected to hear mass upon Sundays and holy-days of obligation? Or have you heard it with wilful distraction? Or not

The tyranny of popery further appears in its assumption of authority to control and to punish its votaries of every rank and station in society.

This arises as naturally from auricular confession, as auricular confession arises from the right of the clergy to determine what actions are sinful, and what doctrines are true. The priest to whom the penitent confesses is the sole judge of his demerit; to him alone, therefore, it belongs to decide what

taken care that your children or servants should hear it? How often? Have you spent those days in idleness or sin? Or been the occasion of others spending them so? How often? Have you done any servile work without necessity on those days? Or set others on doing so? How often? Have you broke the days of abstinence commanded by the church? or eaten more than one meal on fasting days, or been accessory to others so doing? How often? Have you neglected to confess your sins once a year? Or to receive the blessed sacrament at Easter? Have you made a sacrilegious confession or communion, by concealing some mortal sin in confession, or what you doubted might be mortal? Or for want of a hearty sorrow for your sins and a firm purpose of amendment? Or by being grossly negligent in the examination of your conscience? How often? Have you received any other sacrament, for example, confirmation or matrimony, in mortal sin? Have you neglected to perform the penance enjoined in confession? Or said it with wilful distraction? How often? Have you presumed to receive the blessed sacrament after having broken your fast? Have you, after falling into mortal sin, neglected for a long time to return to God by repentance? and for how long a time?" Were we to transcribe the questions on some of the commandments, this page would be rendered unfit for general inspection. Suffice it to say, that they go very much into detail with regard to vile imaginations and desires, and must suggest to those who have not previously been corrupted, possibilities of which it would be far better for them to remain ignorant.

quantity of guilt is incurred, and what penalty wisdom and holiness require. It is usual to attach some penance to the grant of absolution; but the nature and degree of it vary according to the criminality imputed, or the rigour which it is deemed expedient to exercise. It may be to repeat the seven penitential psalms; it may be to receive a number of stripes, to wear a hair shirt, or to perform a pilgrimage; or it may be to pay for a number of masses.

When princes have dared to oppose the will of the sovereign pontiff, punishments have been inflicted on them still more terrific, and efficacious measures have been taken to reduce them to obedience. In some cases, the dominions of the rebellious potentate have been laid under an interdict; and his subjects have been excited to discontent, by the inconvenience they experienced through his crime, when public worship has been suspended, the sacraments refused, and the dead buried without the usual solemnities. If the interdict has failed to humble the refractory monarch, or if it was not deemed expedient to employ its agency, sentence of excommunication has been issued against him. In not less than sixty instances, according to historic testimony, has this dreaded punishment been inflicted by offended popes on sovereign princes. Then, what true son of the church could reconcile it with his conscience to obey an excommunicated king? The ties of allegiance were loosed; the authority of the ruler was destroyed. In not a few instances personal insults have been added to public degradation. Thus Henry IV., the Emperor of Germany, was kept three days in the open air, with his feet bare and

his head uncovered, waiting for an audience from Pope Gregory VII., who, at the expiration of that period, with much condescension received his submissions, and removed the excommunication under which he laboured, but prohibited him from exercising any function of royalty.* Thus Frederic I., who had announced his determination to maintain the dignity of the empire, and lessen the power of the pontiff, was compelled, after exhibiting unavailing tokens of reluctance, to perform the office of equerry to Pope Adrian IV., by holding his stirrup while he mounted his horse.† Thus Henry II., of England, was constrained to suffer his naked back to be scourged by monks at the tomb of St. Thomas à Becket, to atone for his alleged acquiescence in the death of that ambitious prelate.‡ And thus John, after having been excommunicated and assailed by papal bulls, one of which absolved his subjects from their oaths of allegiance, another of which called on Christian princes to assist in his overthrow, was ultimately obliged to resign his kingdom to Pope Innocent III., whose legate trampled under his feet the money presented by the humiliated sovereign, and retained the crown and sceptre five whole days, before he deigned to restore them.§

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, cent. xi. part 2.

† Mosheim, cent. xii. part 2.

‡ Mosheim, cent. xiii. part 2.

§ Mosheim, cent. xiii. part 2. To any one who may be disposed to say, "these are transactions of by-gone days," we recommend the following remarks of the eloquent advocate of modern Romanism, Dr. Wiseman. "The church has never formally given up the wish, however hopeless it may be, that the fervour and discipline of primitive times could be restored; and, consequently, instead of abolishing

Acting on the principle of Gregory VII., that "bishops are superior to kings, and made to judge them," the Romish clergy, while they exercised authority over temporal princes, contrived to emancipate themselves from civil jurisdiction. To their spiritual courts they summoned persons of every rank, to answer before them, in what were called ecclesiastical causes ; but they maintained, that, as spiritual persons, they were exempted from secular control, and would by no means admit the right of a temporal judge to cite them to his tribunal, whatever were the crimes with which they were chargeable. As, however, the inferior clergy were rendered independent of civil authority only through the patronage of their superiors in the church, these immunities were obtained at the price of absolute allegiance to the upper ranks of the hierarchy. Such superintendence was therefore exercised over them as effectually precluded any material departure from the doctrine or policy of Rome. All mankind were subject to the bishops ; all the bishops were subject to the pope : and because the parochial clergy were not always sufficiently alive to the interests of their head, various orders of monks and friars were instituted, who derived their authority immediately from the pontiff, who were responsible to him alone, and

their injunctions, and specifically substituting other practices in their place, she has preferred ever considering these as mitigations of what she still holds herself entitled to enforce. The only difference, therefore, between her former and her present practice is, that the mitigation or commutation has become the ordinary form of satisfaction, which, however unwilling, she deems it prudent to exact." — *Wiseman's Lectures*, vol. ii. p. 82. (1836.)

who acted as spies for him over bishops, archbishops, and primates. The system was thus brought to such perfection, and its various parts so firmly fitted together, that in those places where its operations are uncontrolled by heretical influence, the laity are dependents on the clergy, and the clergy are dependents on the pontiff.

How totally this system differs from any thing exemplified or encouraged in the prohibited Book, it is not necessary to say. Jesus, our Master, himself meek and lowly of heart, took every opportunity to discountenance the first symptoms of ambition among his disciples, and to teach, that though the rulers of the Gentiles exercised authority, it was not to be so among them. The apostles after his ascension appealed boldly to their converts, whether they were not "gentle" among them, "as a nurse cherisheth her children;" and taught the elders of the infant churches not to consider themselves "lords over God's heritage, but ensamples to the flock," 1 Pet. v. 3. But here we see a combination of skilful artifices to exalt the clergy and to depress the laity. Here we see a system which manifested its spirit in well-chosen words, when the council of Troyes decreed, that "the powers of the world shall not dare to seat themselves in the presence of the bishops, unless desired;" and which has shown it as plainly in subsequent ages, by obtaining for its patrons the complete control of the bodies and the souls, the purses and the exertions, of all its deluded votaries. How expressive was the prediction: "I know that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock," Acts xx. 29.

But the tyranny of the popish system has been displayed, not only in its operations on its own

adherents, but also in the conduct it has led them to adopt towards those who did not acknowledge its authority.

When Jesus Christ commissioned his disciples to evangelize the followers of Jewish rabbies, and the worshippers of heathen deities, the only means he suggested, as suitable to the work, was the promulgation of gospel truth. There were members of the sanhedrim favourable to his cause, but nothing was said about political influence. Miraculous powers were communicated to his ministers, but they were not authorized to call fire from heaven to consume an opponent, or to inflict disease on a disobedient hearer. His kingdom was not of this world; that was the reason why he did not suffer his servants to fight to prevent his being delivered to the Jews; that, also, was the reason why the influence of truth, confirmed by signs of Divine approbation, and rendered effectual by the influences of his Almighty Spirit, was the only agency by which his interests were to be established among the Gentiles. He was to be exhibited as expiring on the cross in order to draw men to him; his dying love was the motive by which they were to be constrained to exert themselves in his service; and if any appeal was made to fear, it must be by enforcing the terrors of the Lord, not the terrors of the magistrate.

But the Romish church, despotic and precipitate from its birth, thinking little of the nature of truth and the constitution of the human mind, but determined at all events to accomplish its purposes and suppress its opponents, has ever been ready to call for the succour of temporal princes. It has been accustomed to argue, that truth being valuable,

it was benevolent to enforce it ; and religion being adapted to promote the good of society, it was commendable in the civil governor to employ his authority to restrain and to punish the abettors of error. The allegiance of the ruler to God, and his care for his people, equally required, according to its opinion, that he should employ the sword entrusted to him, to avenge the honour of the Deity, who was insulted by idolatrous worship, and to put down every pernicious practice, and every heretical doctrine, whose tendency must be injurious to man.

This principle, once admitted, was found to apply to the worshipper of Jupiter, whose oxen were sacrificed according to the ancient superstition in the pagan temple ; to the unbelieving Jew, who justified the decision of Caiaphas, and misrepresented the adorable Redeemer ; to the misguided Mohammedan, who substituted for the sanctifying doctrine of Christ, a system which was adapted to stimulate the passions, and to gratify the perverse inclinations of the heart ; and to the stubborn heretic, the most dangerous enemy of all, because he assumed the garb of a friend, who debased Christianity by incorporating with it his own corrupt imaginations, or stripped it of its glories, by denying some of its principal truths : and if there be any other thing contrary to sound doctrine, it must also rank with these offences, and be punished according to its demerit ; for every possible error is injurious in its tendency, being adapted, in some degree, to dishonour God, and injure society.

The Romish clergy, then, having, as they pretend, an infallible, living, speaking judge, in all matters of controversy, able to answer all questions and determine all disputes ; and temporal magis-

trates having, according to this judge, a right to punish erroneous principles and practices ; between the interpreters of truth on the one hand and the executioners of their decrees on the other, the pagan and the Jew, the Mohammedan and the heretic, have been in a melancholy condition.

But in every age the chief enmity has been excited, and the heaviest punishments have been endured, by those persons who acknowledged Jesus Christ as their Lord, but would not acknowledge the pope as his vicar. It would be easy to enter into details on this subject, which would harrow up our feelings ; for horrid deeds have been perpetrated under the mask of religion, by the members of this corrupt community, with which no other acts of cruelty or injustice recorded by historians could bear comparison. But the exigency of the case does not demand the recital, and I willingly forbear to make it. My object is not to stimulate your passions, but to inform your judgment ; not to provoke indignation against mistaken men, but to expose the nature of their system. It is proper that you should be informed, that, from the earliest ages, there have been persons whom the degenerate but dominant church has denominated heretics ; and that though we know scarcely any thing more of large classes of them than their adversaries have recorded, and though these prejudiced historians have attributed to them the grossest errors, and charged them with the vilest crimes, yet there is reason to believe that many of them were faithful witnesses for God. Faithful to their principles they must have been, for the constancy of a large proportion of them was put to the severest test ; and of many who suffered as heretics in those ages,

concerning which our information is the fullest, we perceive that their heresies were much like our own. Thousands, tens of thousands, millions of these, for their attachment to what they thought truth, or for their opposition to what they considered pernicious error, have endured the most distressing indignities in their own persons; the most heart-rending violations of parental, paternal, and conjugal feelings; or, the *ultimatum* of cruelty, the application of violence to the body, sufficient to destroy its union with the soul, with such concomitant circumstances as to occasion exquisite corporeal pain and mental agitation in the dying moments. It is not necessary to describe the dungeons into which these estimable sufferers were cast, or the racks on which they were tortured, the mountains and forests in which they wandered, or the privations and hardships they endured, the insults they experienced while permitted to live, or the ingenious variety of methods by which they were barbarously murdered. The day is coming when every one of them will stand at the tribunal of Christ; his story will then be developed, his adversaries will be heard, and a right judgment will be awarded.

A disposition to persecute is not peculiar to the professors of any creed, or the members of any community. It is matter of regret that different sects, both in ancient and modern times, have been guilty of shedding human blood in the name of the gentle and benign Redeemer; but in this species of wickedness the church of Rome has long had an unrivalled pre-eminence. Other churches have persecuted casually—she constantly; others under the influence of transient feeling—she systematically, and from principle. Not content with the

common zeal of her public functionaries, she has consecrated men to this peculiar service; she has instituted offices, and established communities for this express purpose; she has encouraged whole troops of ecclesiastics to devote themselves to the work; and she has allowed men the character of priests, the revenues of princes, and the power of despots, on condition that they would make persecution the sole business of their lives.

Among the various devices which have been employed by the Romish clergy, in various ages, to annihilate their opponents, and reduce all Christendom to a blind subserviency, it is proper to distinguish the establishment of those imperious courts, those dens of murderers, which are known in many popish countries by the title of "the holy inquisition." It is doubtful, indeed, whether those out of the Romish church, or those in it, have suffered most from this organized conspiracy against conscience and evangelical truth; but it seems most naturally to belong to this part of our subject, because its original design was the extirpation of heresy. In the thirteenth century this expedient was devised; and in the ages immediately succeeding, several of these infernal offices were erected. Strong as is the epithet just used, it is not too strong to be applied to that which deluded victims of Romish tyranny have been taught to call "the holy office;" a tribunal over which three ecclesiastics preside, having the cognizance of all heresy, infidelity, blasphemy, perjury, sorcery, poisoning, bigamy, usury, and every other species of offence which can be construed into a crime against religion; a tribunal which immures in a secret dungeon its wretched victim, not allowing him the slightest

communication with relative or friend, medical attendant or legal adviser; a tribunal which employs hundreds of spies to search for culprits, and receives accusations against any man from a voluntary informer, however interested, or however base; a tribunal which gives the astonished prisoner no intimation of the crime with which he is charged, or the person through whose testimony he is arrested, but requires him, guilty or innocent, to guess the sin and indict himself; a tribunal into the cheerless caverns of which many enter, but few return.

In the stillness of midnight, when the family is tranquilly reposing, a loud knocking is heard at the door. "Who is there?" "The holy inquisition!" A carriage is perceived, in which some of the familiars of the court are seated. The tremulous voice within now asks, "Who is wanted?" The individual is named. It may be the father or the son; it may be the wife or the daughter; but expostulation or delay would be both unavailing and dangerous. The master of the house may be wanted for his riches; the object of his tenderest affections may be wanted for her beauty; but not a word must be spoken, not a minute must be wasted: an immediate surrender takes place. The carriage drives away with its helpless captive, and the bereaved family dare not follow or even lament aloud, but mourn in silence and despair; and when an acquaintance, missing the individual from his accustomed seat at table, asks what has become of him, a significant shake of the head is the only answer. Years roll away, but no inquiry must be made; and if after the lapse of time, and the endurance of suffering, the victim is permitted

to return, his lips are sealed, he or she is sworn to secrecy ; all is mystery and horror.

But there is One to whom the darkness and the light are both alike. His eye traces the course, penetrates the thick stone wall, and surveys the gloomy cell. Every sigh enters his ear, and is recorded in his journal. And there is nothing secret that shall not be revealed. Many a tragedy is preserved in the book of Divine remembrance, which shall be rehearsed before assembled worlds. The oppressed shall have liberty to speak as audibly as the oppressor. The veil of hypocrisy shall be torn aside. Persons and events shall appear in their own true colours. Then will the history of the inquisition afford to the whole intelligent creation, the most complete display of the amazing wickedness of man, and the yet more amazing long suffering of his Creator.*

Ecclesiastical history testifies that rivers of blood have been shed under the influence of popish principles in every country in which they have prevailed. Nor is there any species of brutality which it seems possible that human beings should exercise towards each other, for which the professed vindicators of religious purity in the Romish church have not furnished a precedent. It is fair to impute to the barbarism of past times many of the

* According to the estimate of Llorente, the number of victims of the Spanish inquisition, from 1481 to 1808, amounted to 341,021, of whom above thirty thousand were burnt alive. During the French rule in Spain the inquisition was abolished. Ferdinand VII. restored it in 1814, but in 1820 it was again abolished by the Cortes, and it has not yet been re-established. Its operations have also been suspended in Portugal, and very much restricted in Rome itself.

deeds of cruelty which historians have recorded, as perpetrated by papists on the defenceless protestants in Piedmont, in the Netherlands, in France, in Ireland, and in Britain itself. Surely in the more civilized state of society in which we live, no hostility, religious or political, could so far transform men into demons, as to induce our countrymen to inflict such savage tortures on any human being, or any living animal, as are described in many martyrologies! But still there are grounds for a painful belief that it is in the very nature of popery to persecute, and even to persecute to death. Its claims are too arrogant to make toleration consistent with its creed; its hostility to private judgment is too deadly to suffer it to respect religious scruples. Respectable individuals of the Romish persuasion in this country disclaim any wish to repress by force the religion of their neighbours. Receiving themselves the advantages arising from a tolerant spirit, they so far apprehend its excellence, as to acknowledge that in the present state of society it is expedient. As the Jewish rabbi who asked, "who is my neighbour?" could not but perceive that it was good in the Samaritan to assist the suffering Hebrew, and thus was taught the propriety of general benevolence; so they have learnt in their own experience the value of toleration, and probably think that were circumstances reversed they would "go and do likewise." And it is likely that humanity has so much influence over their minds, as to lead them to detest the very thought of treating their neighbours as protestants were treated by Romanists, in some former periods of British history. But if popery were to regain that ascendancy in this nation which it formerly had, there

is reason to fear that it would appear to be, in one respect, what its friends assure us that it is,—“every where and always the same.” In that case, the doctrine of implicit faith would oblige these respectable individuals, or their successors, to receive sentiments from Rome which it is not the interest of Rome at present to press on their attention. And this conviction, which it would be pleasant to see cause to abandon, will not be at all weakened by acquaintance with what the late vicar apostolic of the midland district has written on the subject.

You will, perhaps, be surprised to hear that this high authority among British Roman catholics actually denies that the church of Rome has ever persecuted at all! Listen however to his language: “I begin with expressly denying the Bishop of London’s charge; namely, that the catholic church maintains a claim of punishing heretics with penalties, imprisonment, tortures, and death; and I assert on the contrary, that she disclaims the power of so doing.” “Long before their time,” he adds, in reference to St. Ambrose and St. Martin, who had refused to hold communion with two Spanish bishops, because they had interfered in the capital punishment of certain Priscillian heretics—“long before their time Tertullian had taught that it does not belong to religion to force religion; and a considerable time after, when St. Augustine and his companions, the envoys of Pope Gregory the great, had converted our King Ethelbert to the Christian faith, they particularly instructed him not to use forcible means for the purpose of inducing any of his subjects to follow his example. But what need of more authorities on this head, since our canon

law, as it stood in ancient times, and as it still stands, renders all those who have actually concurred to the death or mutilation of any human being, whether catholic or heretic, Jew or pagan, even in a just war, or by exercising the art of surgery, or by judicial proceedings, irregular; that is to say such persons cannot be promoted to holy orders, or exercise those orders, if they have actually received them. Nay, when an ecclesiastical judge or tribunal has, after due examination, pronounced that any person accused of obstinate heresy is actually guilty of it, he is required by the church expressly to declare in her name, that her power extends no further than such decision; and in case the obstinate heretic is liable, by the laws of the state, to death or mutilation, the judge is required to pray for his pardon. Even the council of Constance, in condemning John Huss of heresy, declared that its power extended to nothing further.*

You now perceive the pretext for denying what you might previously have supposed no man would have ventured to dispute. The church, in the language of a Romanist, sometimes means the clergy alone, and sometimes the clergy and laity united. When it is said, "we know that salvation belongs to the church alone, and that no one can partake of Christ, nor can be saved, out of the catholic church and faith," the clergy and laity are both included in the term. But when it is said that the church disclaims the power of persecuting, by the church is only meant the clergy. This appears more fully in the paragraph with which the reverend apologist for Rome follows up the language

* End of Religious Controversy, p. 353.

already cited. "But," he proceeds to say, "whereas many heresies are subversive of the established governments, of the public peace, and of natural morality, it does not belong to the church to prevent princes and states from exercising their just authority in repressing and punishing them, when this is judged to be actually the case; nor would any clergyman incur irregularity by exhorting princes and magistrates to provide for those important objects, and the safety of the church itself; by repressing its disturbers; provided he did not concur to the death or mutilation of any particular disturber. Thus it appears that though there have been persecuting laws in many catholic states, the church itself, so far from claiming, actually disclaims the power of persecuting."*

So then the church of Rome does not persecute! That is to say, the fatal blow is struck by the magistrate, not by the minister. The priest does not concur! That is to say, he exhorts the ruler to punish all heretics, but asks mercy for each; he encourages him to repress the church's disturbers, but does not concur in the death of any particular disturber. The distinction may be very satisfactory to a Romish casuist, but with my protestant notions, it would give me but little consolation at the stake, to know that I was burnt not as an individual, but as one of a class, and that the priest who exhorted the prince to kill all of the kind, made it a rule not to take an active part in the murder of any.

When an advocate of genius undertakes a desperate cause, determined to say all that can be said

* Ut supra.

in its favour, it would be politic for him to submit his plea to the revision of some sober-minded friend, lest it should appear that in his zeal to say every thing, he had said too much. Dr. Milner's apology for Romish tyranny affords an exemplification of this remark. Had some brother prelate of a temperament less ardent than his own, perused his manuscript before it was committed to the press, he would probably have advised the omission of those closing paragraphs, in which the principles of the Romish church are pleaded as an apology for its practices. Charging protestants with being greater persecutors than the members of his own church, he adduces two circumstances as aggravations of their guilt, which really deserve our serious attention. "In the first place," he says, "when-ever catholic states and princes have persecuted protestants, it was always in favour of an ancient religion, which had been established in their country perhaps a thousand or fifteen hundred years, and had during that time preserved its peace, order, and morality, while they clearly saw, that an attempt to alter this religion, would unavoidably produce incalculable disorders and sanguinary contests. On the other hand, protestants every where persecuted in behalf of some new system in opposition to the established laws of the church, and of their respective states."*

Here you have a plea for catholic persecutors drawn from the lofty claims of that church to which they belong; but if you proceed one step further, you will find another plea drawn from its tenets! "In the second place, if catholic states

* Ut supra, p. 368.

and princes have enforced submission to their church by persecution, they were fully persuaded that there is a Divine authority in this church to decide in all controversies of religion, and that those Christians who refuse to hear her voice when she pronounces upon them, are obstinate heretics. But on what ground can protestants persecute Christians of any description whatsoever? Their grand rule and fundamental charter is, that the Scriptures were given by God for every man to interpret them as he judges best.* Now if this language have any meaning at all, it must mean this : when protestants have persecuted, they have acted in opposition to their principles; but when Romanists have persecuted, they have acted in conformity with their system! If protestants have persecuted, it seems then it has been the fault of the men; if Romanists have persecuted, it has been the legitimate consequence of their creed! Protestants acknowledging the right of private judgment, their sentiments do not lead them to injure others, though through habit, or prejudice, or thoughtlessness they may have done so; but Romanists denying this right, when they pursue the same course do but draw a correct inference from their tenets! "They are fully persuaded that there is a Divine authority in this church to decide in all controversies of religion, and that those Christians who refuse to hear her voice, when she pronounces upon them, are obstinate heretics." The acts of Romish persecutors may then be traced, according to Dr. Milner's own showing, to their belief of that rule which he has laboured with the utmost

* Ut supra, p. 369.

assiduity to establish, and a reliance on which he rightly considers the fundamental and unalterable principle of the whole catholic system.

But we are authorised to affirm that the disposition to appeal to force for the repression of heretical men in their heretical practices has been recently avowed by a higher authority in the Romish church than even the eminent advocate of the English catholics whose words I have quoted. Pope Leo XII. in his letter to his clergy, evinces the unaltered spirit of the system. He had exclaimed in the course of his previous lamentations, "Let God arise and check, restrain, and annihilate this excessive licentiousness of speaking, writing, and publishing abroad;" but, when in descanting on the operations of the Bible Society his anxieties grew stronger, he thought it desirable to look around him for other helpers. "Do ye therefore, venerable brethren," he adds, "place with Augustine, the words of Christ and of the apostle Paul before your eyes, and meditate frequently upon them, that you may teach the people committed to you, how venerable the authority of the church is, which has been settled immediately by God himself.

"Be not disheartened. We acknowledge with the same Augustine, that these waters of the deluge, to wit, the multiplicity of different doctrines, press upon us at every side. We are not within the deluge, but we are encompassed by it; the waters approach us, but do not overwhelm us; they come near to us, but they do not engulf us.

"Again, therefore, we exhort you that your courage fail not. The power of temporal princes will, we trust in the Lord, come to your assistance, whose interest, as reason and experience show, is

concerned when the authority of the church is questioned;* for it never can happen that the things which are Cæsar's, would be given to Cæsar, if the things that are God's be not given to God."†

For what could the pontiff want the aid of temporal princes? Not to adduce new arguments; not to utter persuasive speeches; but to employ authority. By secular force he wished to restrain our biblical fervour; he therefore gave this plain intimation to kings and statesmen that nothing would be more acceptable to him, than that they should unite to suppress the Bible Society, and to forbid all men to question "the authority of the church." When the recent jubilee was proclaimed, if the church of Rome had abandoned its persecuting propensities, the pope was not in the secret: others might applaud toleration, but he hoped to engage on behalf of the church "the power of temporal princes."

Let us be thankful, then, that the government of this favoured country is not under the influence of him who wears the triple crown. Prize the liberty which God in his providence has graciously allotted you, and pray for its continuance. And as you possess the power as well as the right to examine the doctrine of Christ for yourselves, make use of your advantages to know his will; submit to his mandates, and be guided by his word. Avoid all approaches to that intolerant spirit which has ever distinguished the apostate church; deal gently with

* "Aderit vobis, certe in Domino confidimus, sæcularium principum potestas, quorum causa, teste non solum ratione, sed etiam experientia, agitur, cum causa agitur auctoritatis ecclesiæ."

† The Encyclical Letter of Pope Leo XII. p. 18.

Romanists, and show kindness to all men. And finally, evince by your conduct as well as your words, your gratitude to God, for that peculiar favour which has cast your lot where the Bible is openly read, and where conscience is permitted to interpret, where inquisitors are powerless, and where liberty is law.

LECTURE IV.

ON ITS RISE.

“And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work : only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.”—2 *Thess.* ii. 6, 7.

HE who has meditated on the principles, the worship, and the tyranny, of that system which is maintained by the Romish church, but is unacquainted with the history of its origin, can scarcely fail to ask with some degree of astonishment, how it was that a scene of things so repugnant to the genius of the New Testament should have arisen among the professed disciples of Jesus Christ, and superseded his religion. A system which restricts the perusal of those Scriptures which Christ commanded us to search, and which were written by inspired men for our admonition, a system which clothes with the loftiest attributes of God, a mortal man whose name and office are equally unknown to the sacred volume, and authorises him to hurl his thunders at the princes of the earth, to revoke the most solemn oaths, to remit the penalties of sin, and to dispense with the laws of the Creator ; a system which sanctions the worship of saints and angels, and teaches its votaries to prostrate themselves before a wooden image, or a rusty nail ; a system which requires men to believe, on pain of

everlasting misery, dogmas, of the truth of which no evidence has been adduced, and some of which are contradicted by the plainest testimony of their senses ; a system which teaches men to pursue with unrelenting animosity all who submit not to its sway, till their bones, blackened in the flames which have consumed their flesh, are ground to powder, and even then, in the name of all that is adorable, imprecates curses on their souls ; how could such a system ever usurp the name of Christianity ? how could it ever find admission among the followers of Jesus ?

It is important that the inquiry should be answered. We should ascertain, if possible, the first steps which led to this great apostasy, that we may avoid all approaches to its errors ; and that we may learn those salutary truths, for the sake of elucidating which, its existence was permitted.

Now it appears that the secret spring of all the evil, was a worldly spirit, which gained ascendancy in the Christian church, and especially took possession of the hearts of Christian ministers.

It is not to any specific opinion that we can trace the mischief ; it is not to any one erroneous practice ; it is not to the influence of any individual man ; it is not to the operations of any peculiar event ; but the source from which all the waters of this deluge have proceeded, was a worldly spirit, which secularized the church in general, and especially impelled the ministers of Christ, to seek above all things their own aggrandizement. This was the mystery of the iniquity, the secret cause of the subsequent abominations. It did already work in the days of the apostles, but was prevented from operating in all its vigour, till it ceased to be re-

pressed by a preponderating earthly government, which at first hindered the full development of its malignant tendencies.

At the commencement of the apostasy, the external form of Christianity continued; but the spirit fled, and soon the carcase putrefied, and poisoned all the atmosphere. The doctrines and the practices taught by Jesus Christ and his apostles were at first retained; but the tempers they implied were absent; and then the doctrines and the practices were mutilated, to render them agreeable to the dispositions of the professed believers. Office in the Christian church was obtained by men of a very different spirit from its first ministers; and then by degrees they innovated and altered, omitted and added, till at length scarce a vestige remained of the simplicity, the purity, and the transforming efficacy of the gospel.

A primitive Christian was a man who embraced the religion of Jesus Christ because he believed it to be true, and felt that it was adapted to his exigencies. It revealed a Saviour who could rescue him from guilt, depravity, and ruin. He felt his need of pardon; and it presented an atoning sacrifice. He felt his need of instruction; and it revealed the way to happiness, and gave an unerring rule of conduct. He felt his need of holiness; and he found motives to stimulate him to duty in gospel doctrines, and assistance to perform it in the promised aid of the Holy Spirit to every supplicant. Believing the statements of the New Testament to be true, he thought that nothing which earth afforded could bear to be put into competition with the happiness of heaven. His affections were set on things above; there was his treasure; there

consequently was his heart. Knowing that in heaven he had a better and an enduring substance, he could take joyfully the spoiling of his goods. Animated by love to Christ, he was willing to suffer for his sake. He loved his home, his wife, his children; but if called to part with these or renounce the Saviour, he preferred the Saviour to them all. Conscious that all which he possessed he owed to the distinguishing grace of God, he walked humbly before him. It was his constant aim to imitate Jesus Christ, obey his commands, and live to his glory. Meekness and patience, humility and benevolence, were the predominant features of his social character. He lived above the world, though in it; looking not so much on things seen and temporal, as on things unseen and eternal; walking by faith, rather than by sight.

But it sometimes happened that a man who exhibited this delightful simplicity and devotedness at the commencement of his profession, declined afterwards in love, in zeal, and in spirituality of heart. He retained his place in the church, and attended regularly to the externals of religion, but lost the heavenly feeling by which he was formerly characterized. Such degeneracy was contagious; and instances soon appeared, in which the majority of a church left their first love, and losing by degrees their original temper, became formal, self-complacent, and lukewarm. Individuals were found in some cases to unite themselves with the society, who never had the Christian spirit, but who through the influence of connexions, or the hope of temporal advantage, professed to be believers. Such men would acknowledge the truth of Christian doctrine, but not exhibit its influence. They would preserve

decorum in their conduct, but the religion of the heart would be wanting. They would attend with regularity to public ordinances, but would observe them with different feelings from those they excited in the minds of the spiritual.

Now, when unhappily a considerable proportion of the church consisted either of false professors of the gospel, or of genuine disciples in a degenerate frame, the choice of officers would naturally be conducted on unscriptural and injurious principles. If a bishop were to be elected, eloquence would in such a state of things be considered a more important qualification than fervent piety, or biblical wisdom; and family ties would have more influence in the choice than personal adaptation. And if through his talents or his connexions, a man were instated in this office, whose heart was either destitute of religious feeling, or but partially under its influence, the consequences would inevitably be disastrous. Under his ministrations, the degeneracy would naturally increase. Spiritual concerns would be neglected. Pomp and show, worldly splendour, and conformity to the maxims and predilections of the heathen, would be introduced. It would be the constant endeavour of such a man, to enhance his own power; to impress the people with a high sense of his clerical superiority; to appropriate to himself flattering titles; to introduce such ceremonies as might seem to dignify the officiating minister; and by every method which worldly policy could suggest, to aggrandize the church in order to aggrandize its leader. In such a case it might be said, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work."

An approximation to this state was exhibited by the church at Corinth, when Paul addressed them

in his first epistle. The spirit of the gospel had evaporated, though attachment to its name was retained; and much worldly-mindedness was evinced while they were contending for the pre-eminence of their highly-gifted teachers. One cried, 'I am for Paul,' and another, 'I am for Apollos;' a third declared himself for Cephas, and a fourth for Christ. The apostle therefore condemned them all, and recommended a more excellent way. The principles by which they were actuated were worldly, though religion was the object of their fervour. "Ye are yet carnal," said he; "for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"

But to such a pitch of arrogance had some attained, who still bore office in the church, before the death of John, that one at least, not only exercised arbitrary authority over his brethren, but actually refused communion with the only surviving apostle. "I wrote unto the church," he complains, "but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church." Thus "the mystery of iniquity did already work."

How this worldly spirit among the people, and this disposition to aggrandize themselves among the ministers of Christ, continued to operate after the death of the apostles, it belongs to ecclesiastical history to tell.* And though much respecting the

* See for instance Mosheim, Eccles. Hist. Cent. II. Part II. Chap. ii.

state of Christian society in these early ages, is involved in darkness, yet we may there see the worldly spirit assimilating the church of Jesus Christ to the kingdoms of secular princes, creating offices for ambition to desire, and trampling on the rights of private judgment and private feeling. All this was not achieved without opposition ; but alas ! the whole scene exhibits a general departure from the simple, humble, self-denying spirit of Christianity. Eusebius, bishop of Cæsarea, the great historian of ecclesiastical antiquity, referring to the Christians of the age immediately preceding his own, gives a lamentable view of the degeneracy which prevailed even before the last and fiercest of the ten pagan persecutions. A season of external prosperity had occurred, in which the number of professed disciples was greatly multiplied, and the rulers of the church were courted and honoured by the rulers and governors of provinces. “ Who could describe,” says the historian, “ those vast collections of men that flocked to the religion of Christ, and those multitudes crowding in from every city, and the illustrious concourse in the houses of worship ? On whose account, not content with the ancient buildings, they erected spacious churches from the foundation in all the cities. These, advancing in the lapse of time, and daily increasing in magnitude and improvement, were not restrained by any odium or hostility ; nor was any malignant demon able to infatuate, nor human machinations prevent them, as long as the providential hand of God superintended and guarded his people as the worthy objects of his care. But when, by reason of excessive liberty, we sunk into negligence and sloth, one envying and reviling another in different ways, and

we were almost, as it were, on the point of taking up arms against each other, and were assailing each other with words as with darts and spears, prelates inveighing against prelates, and people rising up against people, and hypocrisy and dissimulation had arisen to the greatest height of malignity, then the Divine judgment, which usually proceeds with a lenient hand, whilst the multitudes were yet crowding into the church, with gentle and mild visitations began to afflict its episcopacy; the persecution having begun with those brethren that were in the army. But, as if destitute of all sensibility, we were not prompt in measures to appease and propitiate the Deity. Some, indeed, like atheists, regarding our situation as unheeded and unobserved by Providence, added one wickedness and misery to another. But some that appeared to be our pastors, deserting the law of piety, were inflamed against each other with mutual strifes, only accumulating quarrels and threats, rivalry, hostility, and hatred to each other, only anxious to assert the government as a kind of sovereignty for themselves."* Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, drew a similar picture of the state of the church when the persecution broke out under Decius in the year 249. Addressing his presbyters, he speaks of the clergy as hunting after gain and the improvement of their fortunes; indulging in haughtiness and envy and party quarrels; renouncing the world in word only; pleasing themselves at the hazard of displeasing all the world besides.† We cannot suppose that these censures were universally applicable;

* Eusebius, Eccles. Hist. Book VIII. chap. ii.

† Epist. xi.

the constancy with which great numbers endured the cruel persecutions which ensued forbids the idea: but, taken in conjunction with similar testimonies and concomitant circumstances, they compel us to believe that a sad declension from Christian purity prevailed. It had commenced before the close of the first century, as is evident from the seven epistles dictated to the last of the apostles in the isle of Patmos; it had gradually displayed itself in a variety of forms during the second century; and before the close of the third century the deterioration was very general and very great.

At this period an event took place which released the mystery of iniquity from restraint, and produced a total alteration in ecclesiastical affairs. Constantine, the Roman emperor, declared himself a Christian. Before this time, the religion of Jesus had been generally discountenanced in the imperial court, and opposed by men in power throughout the provinces. Persecutions had been frequent and severe; and toleration under the most favourable rulers, seldom complete. But now the governor of the civilized world, either from policy or conviction, and different writers ascribe to him different motives, avowed himself a disciple of the despised Nazarene, encouraged Christian worship, and patronized Christian ministers. In the early part of his reign, he published an edict, allowing both Christians and pagans the free exercise of their religion: but afterwards, he proceeded much further. He erected splendid temples for Christian worship, bearing a striking resemblance to pagan temples, both in their external and internal appearance. He adorned those temples, many of which were built over the tombs of martyrs, and dedicated to their

memory, with pictures and images. He caused medals to be dispersed throughout the provinces, on which he was represented in a humble and suppliant posture of Christian devotion. He prohibited by law the worship of idols, and assigned to Christian ministers the honours and authority of the deposed pagan priests. On the bishops of the predominant sect he lavished his imperial treasure; and against their heretical opponents he exercised his power, by banishing their leaders, prohibiting their assemblies, and burning their books. Worldly men now coveted and obtained the highest offices in the Christian church, and regulated its doctrine and its worship by worldly principles. Every possible expedient was adopted to impart to it an air of grandeur. To make Christianity more palatable to pagan neighbours, many of their customs were borrowed, and observed as Christian rites. Judaism having much in it adapted to dazzle the imagination, many Levitical institutions were incorporated with the simple religion of Jesus. The public prayers degenerated into swelling bombast; the sermons were studded with vain embellishments to attract admiration; festivals and commemorations of the martyrs were multiplied; magnificent vestments were worn by the ministers; costly vessels were used in the service; mitres, tiaras, crosiers, wax tapers, processions and lustrations contributed to the pomp; and loud congratulations on the prosperity of the church every where abounded, which were scarcely interrupted by the whispers of the few, who said that formerly they had golden priests and wooden cups, but now they had golden cups and wooden priests!

During several successive reigns the affairs of the

church were in a fluctuating state. Some of the emperors favoured paganism, others supported Christianity; and of these, some patronized the adherents to the Nicene creed, and others its opponents. The persecutors were in their turn persecuted, whenever the partialities of the reigning monarch were contrary to those of his predecessor. At length a victory, the effects of which were permanent, was gained by the trinitarian bishops under Theodosius. That emperor, who appears to have been sincere in his attachment to Christianity, but whose zeal was indiscreet, distinguished himself by his exertions to annihilate both the ancient superstitions and the modern heresies. In the year 383 a council assembled under his auspices at Constantinople, in which the creed was ratified which had been drawn up by the council of Nice under Constantine, and all who impugned it were anathematized. Severe edicts were immediately issued against those who dissented from it. They were strictly forbidden to meet or to worship, to preach or to ordain. They were disqualified for honourable or lucrative employments, prohibited from making wills or receiving legacies, and in some cases subjected to banishment or death. Christian blood began again to flow, before the conclusion of the century which witnessed the emancipation of the Redeemer's followers from heathen persecutions. About the year 390, Theodosius issued an edict abolishing the worship of pagan idols. The act of sacrificing was declared to be high treason against the state, expiable only by the death of the guilty. These imperial laws it is said were rigidly executed; the worship of Jupiter and Apollo was effectually suppressed, but the carnal weapons employed could

only kill the body of paganism ; its spirit survived ; and entering the Christian temple, exerted there an influence as powerful as it had ever possessed in its original abode.

You may form some idea of the degree in which professed Christians, in these times, were affected by the operation of the mystery of iniquity, from the circumstances which attended the election of that bishop who presided at Rome when Theodosius ascended the throne, and was, in the view of the emperor, a standard of orthodoxy. So severe was the conflict for this spiritual office, between Damasus, the successful candidate, and Ursinus, his rival, that 137 persons were killed in the tumult it excited, and the prefect of Rome was obliged to seek refuge in its suburbs. Ammianus Marcellinus, a heathen writer of that period, describing the scene, assigns reasons for the ardour of the struggle. " I must acknowledge," he says, " that when I reflect on the pomp attending that dignity, I am not surprised that those who are fond of parade should quarrel and fight, and strain every nerve to attain this office, since they are sure if they succeed, to be enriched with the presents of the matrons, to appear abroad no more on foot, but in stately chariots, and gorgeously attired, to keep sumptuous tables, nay, and to surpass kings themselves in the splendour and magnificence of their entertainments. But how happy would they be, if despising the voluptuousness and show of the city, which they plead in excuse for their luxury, they followed the example of some bishops in the provinces, who by the temperance and frugality of their diet, the poverty and plainness of their dress, the unassuming modesty of their looks, approve themselves pure

and upright to the eternal God, and all his genuine worshippers !”*

Such in fact was the external splendour attached to that office, that a pagan nobleman of the highest rank said, when conversing with Damasus, on religious subjects, “ Make me but bishop of Rome, and I will turn Christian immediately.”†

The bishop of Rome was indeed, in that age, a person of great and increasing importance. When the seat of empire was removed to Constantinople, his influence was more powerful than that of any other resident in the west. To him therefore appeals were naturally made by contending parties, in the absence of the sovereign, and he was by no means slow to avail himself of the advantages with which locality, custom, and wealth supplied him, for the aggrandizement of himself and his office. His authority was long checked and restrained by the jealousy of the other leading metropolitans, particularly the patriarchs of Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople; but Rome had in many respects the pre-eminence. At length in the year 588, the patriarch of Constantinople, by the advice of a general council, assumed the title of universal bishop. This of course greatly offended the ambitious prelate of Rome, who could acknowledge no superior. He wrote a letter on the subject to the reigning emperor, in which he called it a “ blasphemous name,” and used all his efforts to procure its suppression. In a subsequent letter he declared, “ Whoever adopts or affects the title of universal bishop, has the pride and character of antichrist,

* Lib. 27. cap. 3. in Camp. Lect. Eccles. Hist. Lect. xii.

† Camp. ut sup.

and is in some manner his forerunner in this haughty quality of elevating himself above the rest of his order." While this dispute was pending, Phocas, a centurion in the army, murdered the emperor and seized his crown. The bishop of Rome hastened to congratulate him on his accession, and the usurper in return upheld the interests of the Roman see; and though death removed that individual from office who had reprobated the title, before his own reluctance to use it had been put to the test, his successor, Boniface, readily accepted from the murderer, Phocas, the name and authority of universal bishop. In the year 606, a decree was issued, by which this title was entailed in perpetuity on the Roman pontiff, and he was vested with the primacy of all the bishops of the empire.*

These were times of general anarchy. Once powerful, Rome had decayed and fallen, through the luxury of its citizens, the tyranny of its governors, and the violence of its foes. Europe was inundated with ignorant barbarians, who readily embraced the superstitious species of Christianity which prevailed, and humbled themselves before the sacred pontiff and his coadjutors. The absolute reign of the clergy now commenced. It was not the kingdom of Christ that succeeded to the dominion of ancient Rome, but the kingdom of the clergy, who exercised an authority almost as complete as ambition could desire, over the ten secular principdoms which sprung out of the ruins. A large tract of Italy was surrendered to the pope as his nominal domain; but, in fact, he became governor of Europe. He and his agents rendered the sovereigns of Christen-

* Camp. Lect. Eccles. Hist. Lect. xvi.

dom their vassals, imposed taxes on the people, and obtained possession of the most magnificent buildings, and the most fertile lands. The power of that government which in the apostolic age controlled the corrupting spirit, being now destroyed, the mystery of iniquity developed its tendency without restraint. The man of sin attained his full maturity, and swayed his malignant sceptre over the deceived and wondering nations.

It is not necessary to pursue this part of the subject further. The subsequent history of the papal authority is, indeed, well deserving of studious regard; but all we can attend to on the present occasion is its rise. The brief view now presented of its origin, relates principally to the ascendancy which the clergy and their leader gradually acquired. It will readily be seen that this naturally implied the main feature of popery, the insufficiency of the Scriptures as a rule. As, however, it may be wished that a more particular account should be given of the manner in which a direct appeal to the Scriptures fell into disuse, it will be well to advert to some of the pretences under which an aspiring hierarchy substituted their own decisions for the dictates of the sacred volume, and gradually superseded its perusal.

Men who had been familiar with the apostles while living, acted in entire conformity with the maxims of Scripture and of common sense, when they observed the commands and relied on the doctrines which their inspired teachers had given to them verbally. Paul exhorted the churches he had founded to "hold the traditions which they had been taught, whether by word or epistle." The "traditions" mean simply the things delivered; and

his design evidently is, that they should obey equally the directions he had given when present, and the instructions communicated in his letters. When controversies arose, it was natural for men who had conversed with apostles, to mention what they had heard them say on any subject as well as what they had written; and this, to the individual who had a perfect recollection of the words, was as satisfactory as though the inspired decision had been conveyed to his mind by the eye instead of the ear. It was an argument to which an opponent who had not possessed the same accidental advantage could not easily reply; he must either submit or question the accuracy of the narration: and in the age which immediately succeeded, it was equally natural that a disciple should cite, on behalf of a custom or a tenet, whatever he had heard from his father, or his grandfather, or his aged friend, as having dropped from the lips of the apostles, and be inclined to lay stress upon it; though, in proportion to the distance of time which elapsed, and the number of persons through whom it passed, it would become increasingly liable to corruption. A judicious man, who had no clandestine purpose to answer, would give little attention to such stories, knowing the accidents to which they had been exposed in their passage; but a credulous person, with pious intentions, would be likely to be imposed on himself, and might be the means of imposing on others. Such a man Papias appears to have been, who lived at this period, and whose industry is thus described by himself, in language transmitted to us by Eusebius. "If at any time I met with any one who had conversed with the elders, I made a diligent inquiry after their sayings; what Andrew or

what Peter said, or what Philip, or Thomas, or James, or John, or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples, were wont to say; and what Aristion, and John the elder, the disciples of the Lord, uttered. For I thought that those things contained in books could not profit me so much as what I heard from the mouths of men still surviving." Others followed the same course; and how convenient an acquaintance with this table-talk theology must be to an over-bearing or weak-minded teacher, it is not necessary to show. By appealing to this, he could answer arguments which he knew not how otherwise to meet; or cut short the dispute by an authoritative declaration, that his was the old doctrine taught in his younger days, and that every deviation from it was an unhallowed novelty, the offspring of a speculative disposition, a licentious innovation on venerable customs. In proportion as the professed ministers of Christ grew arrogant and haughty, it is evident that their partiality for this method of expounding Scripture and deciding controversies would increase.

In the third century, when many corruptions sprung up, a mode of interpreting the inspired writings obtained repute, which it is necessary to notice, as having materially contributed to undermine their authority. Origen, one of the most learned and industrious of the ancient Christians, to whom we are indebted for much valuable information respecting the sacred text, was unhappily attached, in an immoderate degree, to the Platonic system of philosophy. He studied the Scriptures with great diligence, and commented on them with much erudition, but appears to have been deficient in that docility which leads a man to "become a

fool that he may be wise," submitting all his reasonings to the decision of revelation. He entertained the idea, that the literal meaning of Scripture would not support the system of divinity maintained by himself and his associates against the attacks of all classes of objectors; and instead of proceeding to modify his creed, that it might correspond with the Scripture, he set himself to find such a method of expounding the Scripture as might make it correspond with his creed. The Platonists interpreted in an allegorical manner the histories of the pagan gods; and he, in conformity with their practice, assigned allegorical interpretations to the Old and New Testaments. He maintained that the source of many errors lay in adhering to the carnal or external part of Scripture, and that there was a spiritual or hidden meaning, much more excellent than the apparent sense. The outward letter, as he termed it, he neglected and despised, and published his allegorical commentaries as the true and valuable meaning; of course imputing to the sacred penmen whatever his fancy or prejudice suggested. Nothing could better suit the purposes of a worldly disputant who was contending not for truth but for victory. The example was too inviting to be neglected, and this mode of treating the oracles of God became prevalent: his opponents could allegorize as well as he. All who desired to model Christianity according to their favourite systems of philosophy, or to display their ingenuity in producing new arguments for well known truths, invented allegorical interpretations, and triumphed in the ease with which they made Scripture teach whatever they desired. An appeal to the simple dictates of revelation thus be-

came unfashionable among Christian divines, and they went on in this interminable labyrinth, pleasing themselves and others with their futile imaginations, "deceiving and being deceived."*

It had always been the practice in the Roman courts of justice to decide matters of a doubtful nature by the authority of certain lawyers, distinguished for ability and experience. If they did not agree in opinion, the point was determined either by a plurality of voices, or by the sentiments of the most illustrious members of the venerable body. In the councils of the Christians this practice was adopted; questions were commonly decided by an appeal to the authority of teachers of great renown, or to the opinions of venerated persons who had been removed from the world. The collection of these opinions into books occupied the labours of many who called themselves commentators on Scripture, but were in reality nothing more than compilers of the interpretations of more ancient doctors.† Thus human fancies and reasonings superseded by degrees the faithful sayings of God. The voice of antiquity was followed with servile and implicit submission, except some advantage to the governors of the church were attainable by innovation. He who was versed in the sentiments of the most famous Christian rabbis was reputed to be a great theologian. By these standards the decisions of councils were regulated, and when a decision was made it became universally binding. On the point to which it related, reference to Scripture was of course superfluous; the question

* See Mosheim, cent. iii. part 2, chap. iii.

† See Mosheim, cent. v. part 2, chap. iii., and cent. vi. part 2, chap. iii.

was set at rest in the minds of the submissive and obedient. If any man ventured to question its correspondence with Scripture, astonishment was expressed at his arrogance, who set up his private judgment in opposition to that of so many learned divines; and the event seemed a proof to the interested and the servile of the truth of an idea which the prevailing taste approved, that the Scriptures were so liable to be abused and perverted, that it was not safe to trust them in the hands of the vulgar. It soon became evident that the inspired writings were not sufficient to teach what passed under the name of the Christian religion. In proportion as innovations were adopted, and decrees multiplied, the sacred volume fell into disrepute among the clergy. In the gross darkness of the middle ages, when few could read, and fewer still were anxious to investigate the word of God, it sunk into general oblivion; and when, in the sixteenth century, public attention was again directed to it, it was found to be too favourable to the reformers, and too hostile to the Romish hierarchy, to be tolerated by the advocates of existing abuses.

Having now traced the origin of the fundamental principles of this anti-christian system, it is not necessary to investigate in a distinct manner the rise of each of its subordinate parts. The Scriptures being set aside, and the authority of the clergy established, every thing went on with scarcely any interruption, as the policy or the passions of the priesthood dictated. Various causes, indeed, contributed to produce those superstitious observances, those idolatrous rites, those impious dispensations, and those tyrannical institutions, to which our thoughts have been directed. A per-

verse imitation of the practices of heathen worship was one of the most fertile sources of these abominations; an imitation in some cases openly avowed, and defended on the plea that Christianity would thus be rendered more palatable to the votaries of the pagan gods. The natural propensity of the human mind to place religion in external forms, and substitute bodily homage and elaborate ceremonials for spiritual service and purity of heart, conduced greatly to the corruption of gospel ordinances, and to the admiration of the pretended merit derived from the sacrifice of domestic comfort and social usefulness. But the love of wealth and grandeur, of adulation and homage, which pervaded all ranks of ecclesiastics; the anxious desire they felt for every thing which could augment veneration for their persons, and submission to their will, did more than any thing else to generate these abuses. To this ambitious spirit we may trace auricular confession, that master-piece of despotism, which secured, with greater certainty than the celebrated ear of Dionysius, a knowledge of every whisper which issued from the lips of its victims: to this we may trace the celibacy of the clergy, the most pernicious of all the devices which hypocrisy ever promoted, but one of the most politic, as it alienated from every interest but that of the church, and made the aggrandizement of the body the exclusive object of every member of the priesthood: to this we may trace the pompous titles, the splendid vestments, the purchased masses, the sainted shrines, the gothic abbeys, the attractive indulgences, the inquisitorial dungeons, the secret trials, and the public executions; all, all were designed to acquire

or preserve to the professed ministers of religion supreme authority over the souls and bodies of their fellow-mortals. That power has been the favourite object of successive Roman pontiffs, the history of past centuries indisputably proves; and the records of the present century will exhibit to the men of future ages, the spectacle of one humbled in circumstances but not in spirit, invoking the aid of friendly sovereigns to confirm his tottering throne, and calling on all his adherents to display a renovated ardour on behalf of established delusions. As the head of that priesthood which once revelled in luxury, fearless and arrogant, but which now perceives that the craft is endangered by which its elevation was obtained, he issues inflammatory addresses to the workmen of like occupation, with all the ardour of Demetrius, and proscribes anew the hated, dreaded volume, that exposes his impostures and predicts his fall.

We should wrong past ages, were we not, while meditating on the gradual rise of those corruptions which perverted the churches of antiquity, to call to recollection the resistance which in many cases the innovations excited. Lamentations were uttered by the more spiritual over the prevailing degeneracy, and remonstrances sometimes issued from their lips: their voices, however, were but little heeded, being drowned in the tumultuous clamour of violent and ambitious men. In the third century the Novatians arose, who continued throughout the fourth in separation from the imperial church, though they received its leading doctrines which were not yet materially corrupted. These maintained much stricter discipline than the dominant sect, by whom they were reviled as Cathari

or Puritans. Soon afterwards the Donatists sprung up in Africa, who, according to the accusations of their revilers, adhered to Novatian severity of discipline. In the fourth century, Ærius formed many distinct societies of Christians in Armenia, Pontus, and Cappadocia; who condemned prayers for the dead, stated fasts, and the celebration of Easter; who denied that bishops were distinguished from presbyters by any Divine right, and who wished to restore Christianity to its primitive simplicity. In the seventh century, the Paulicians arose in Asia Minor, whose distinctive name was derived from their attachment to the writings of Paul, and who professed to draw their tenets exclusively from the New Testament. In Italy itself, during these successive periods, there were many who refused to submit to the domination of the Romish bishops, and protested perseveringly against the prevailing corruptions. The history of the Albigenses and the Waldenses, in the south of France, and in the valleys of Piedmont, against whom whole armies were led forth, and who sustained the rage of the apostate church through several centuries, has been traced so far back as to warrant the assertion that they derived their origin from men who never submitted to the ecclesiastical authority of Rome, but resisted its usurpations from the beginning.*

* Reinerius Saccho, a well-informed inquisitor who flourished during the earlier part of the thirteenth century, gives the following testimony to their antiquity and primitive protestantism:—

“Concerning the sects of ancient heretics, observe, that there have been more than seventy; all of which, except the sects of the Manicheans, and the Arians, and the

Before we leave this part of our subject, let us call to remembrance the importance of forming our ideas of Christianity from the representations of its purest writers. Not modern teachers, however high their reputation, or however excellent their works; these are not the standard of our faith; they, like ourselves, are fallible. Not the first reformers, to whom we are much indebted for the zeal they evinced, and the example they set; they were not entirely freed from the ignorance

Runcarians, and the Leonists, which have infected Germany, have through the favour of God, been destroyed. Among all these sects, which either still exist, or which have formerly existed, there is not one more pernicious to the church than that of the Leonists; and that for three reasons. The first reason is, because it has been of longer continuance; for some say that it has lasted from the time of Sylvester, [A.D. 314,] others from the time of the apostles. The second reason is, because it is more general; for there is scarcely any land in which this sect exists not. The third reason is, because while all other sects, through the immanity of their blasphemies against God, strike horror into their hearers, this of the Leonists has a great semblance of piety; inasmuch as they live justly before men, and believe, together with all the articles contained in the creed, every point well respecting the Deity; only they blaspheme the Roman church and clergy; to which the multitude of the laity are ready enough to give credence."

The Rev. G. S. Faber, from whose "Inquiry into the History and Theology of the ancient Vallenses and Albigenses," this quotation is taken, has fully established the antiquity of this race of faithful, though coarsely clad witnesses. Respecting one of the communities, after having adduced evidence, he says, "Thus during the persecutions of the second and third and fourth centuries, placed in the valleys of the Cottian Alps, as in a citadel fashioned by the hand of nature herself, we find the Val-

of their contemporaries, and several of them derived a bias from some one or other of the vicious modes of interpretation which the church of Rome had introduced. Not the ancient writers, denominated the fathers,—the teachers of the second, and succeeding centuries; they lived in a degenerating period; some partook less than others of the prevailing corruptions, but the mystery of iniquity was at work, and none of them were invulnerable to its attacks. But those inspired men

lenses in the self-same region, still holding the self-same primitive doctrine and practice at the beginning of the fifth century; while by so doing, they characteristically bore witness against those growing superstitions, from which, by their secluded situation, they had been providentially exempted.

“The account of this matter, which I place at the head of the chain of testimony that runs through the whole period of the middle ages, is both deeply interesting and specially important, inasmuch as it furnishes the precise link which has long been wanted, in order, on the strength of evidence, synchronical with the particulars detailed, to connect the Vaudois with the primitive church; and it will not, I hope, argue an unreasonable degree of assumption, if I say, that so far as my own knowledge and reading are concerned, I have been privileged to be the first discoverer of the evidence in question.” p. 290.

Respecting the Albigenes, Mr. Faber says, “Long before the commencement of the eleventh century, quite back indeed to the semi-apostolical times of the second century, we may observe, throughout the churches of southern France, a strong adherence to a purer system of religion than what had become fashionable at Rome; and with it, we may also observe, a strong disposition to resist the papal encroachments and usurpations. From time to time, moreover, we may see many eminent individuals inculcating the sincere truths of the gospel, and protesting against the veneration of saints, and images, and relics.” p. 260.

whose accounts of the actions and discourses of their beloved Lord were written, not by the mere aid of natural memory, but by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, who was promised to guide them into all the truth, and bring all things to remembrance that Jesus had spoken in their hearing; and whose letters to the churches were couched, not in language dictated by human wisdom, but by the special communications of the Holy Ghost; the men who could say in confirmation of their doctrine, "He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who also hath given unto us his Holy Spirit." Here the system shines forth in its simple beauty; and hence its nature and tendency must be judged.

The opponents of revealed truth are accustomed to declaim against the conduct of its professed friends. "What wars," say they, "has the religion of Jesus excited! What cruelties has it authorised! What murders has it caused! What ambition has it cherished! The history of Christianity is written in blood! Pagans have been men of virtue; pontiffs have been notorious villains. Can this religion be from God?" But how fallacious this kind of reasoning is, if reasoning it may be called, may be readily perceived. The religion of Jesus Christ, as taught by Jesus Christ, is to be found unadulterated in the New Testament. Does the New Testament countenance ambition or vice? It foretold with abhorrence an apostasy; can the fruits of that apostasy be fairly urged as an argument against it? It foretold that grievous wolves should arise to devour the flock; can the ravages of these wolves disprove its divinity? It foretold that in "the latter times some should depart from the faith; giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines

of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy;" ought we then to judge its character from the writings or conduct of teachers of "the latter times?" No! if we wish to know what Christianity is, either that we may determine the legitimacy of its claims, or that as humble learners we may receive its dictates, let us apply ourselves to the study of the unadulterated words of Christ and his apostles.

He who adopts this course will perceive the stress which is uniformly laid in the book of God, on the religion of the heart. There we are taught that the form of godliness will avail nothing without its power. The want of this was the fruitful source of the great apostasy. And it is important to know and to feel that unless our affections are subjugated to the gospel, however correct our opinions, and however excellent the church to which we belong, we are not Christians.

May this consideration lead us all to look with humble faith to that Saviour who is able to renew and regulate the heart; and may we receive from him supplies of grace, to transform us into his likeness, and to fix our affections on those spiritual objects, which will yield unabated delight, when earthly pleasures shall have passed away, and when earthly plaudits shall be forgotten!

LECTURE V.

ON ITS TENDENCY.

“And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.”—
2 Peter ii. 2.

OUGHT we to consider the system which has been described in previous lectures to be a collection of harmless mistakes, or a combination of deadly errors? Is the controversy between those who impugn and those who defend it, a mere question of words and names, of quibbles and punctilios, of unimportant ceremonies and fruitless speculations, or does it involve the fundamentals of religion? What is the aspect of this system towards individuals, towards society, and towards God?

These questions are important to the Christian, to the politician, and to the philanthropist. To every friend of light it must be an interesting inquiry, whether the dark cloud which hangs over nearly the whole of the continent of Europe, be merely a twilight gloom, or the total obscurity of midnight. The man especially who is solicitous that his fellow-mortals should enjoy the blessings of everlasting life, will wish to know whether the path marked out by the pope and cardinals be merely a more circuitous road to heaven than that which he himself travels, or whether it be a direct line to the regions of endless misery. This ought also to be

ascertained, that we may be able to determine the manner in which our hostilities against it should be conducted.

Before we proceed to consider the natural tendency of popery, it may be desirable to prevent misconception, by making two or three admissions.

It is admitted, in the first place, that in the doctrine taught by the church of Rome there is an admixture of good and evil. In the midst of much error there is some truth. With much that is baneful there are some things excellent. Though habitually the discourses of the Romish clergy are sadly defective, there may be sometimes heard from them very evangelical representations of the person, the character, and the work of Christ. Though much is enjoined by them which you would strongly disapprove, some important exhortations are also given, and imperative duties are enforced.

A second admission is, that among the adherents of popery, there are many who do not participate in its spirit. As there are nominal protestants who are not influenced by the sentiments to which they subscribe, but who act in opposition to them; so there are nominal papists, whose hearts are not moulded into the form which their opinions are adapted to produce. Particularly is that the case with a large part of the Roman catholics of this country, whose exemption from the despotism that is exercised where the government is popish, and where the evil operates with unmitigated violence, has caused them to disapprove of much which Spaniards or Italians professing the same faith, would unreservedly extol. Among them are some persons whose minds are considerably enlightened,

whose views are liberal, and whose feelings are tolerant.

It may be admitted, further, that there are individuals in communion with the see of Rome, whose piety we have no reason to doubt. A pleasing persuasion may be indulged, that the reliance of some who venerate the pope, as head of the church on earth, is placed on the atoning sacrifice of Christ, that their professed desire to serve the Redeemer is sincere, and that their own consciences condemn them not in those things which they practise.

But while we acknowledge that there is in popery a portion of good, we must also maintain that the evil so awfully predominates as not only to neutralise the good, but in many cases even to pervert it to injurious purposes. If it is admitted that among its supporters there are many who do not participate in its spirit, it must be added that no credit is on this account due to the system. Their mental constitution or favourable habits may have given them strength enough to resist the poison in the dose in which it has been administered, but it is poison still. If there are men of piety attached to the Romish scheme, it is in spite of its tendency; and they are opposed, and thwarted, and disliked by those who occupy the highest stations in the church. Popery is naturally adapted to produce ignorance, irreligion, and infidelity.

That popery tends to produce ignorance of religious truth, you can scarcely fail to have remarked. Ignorance of Scripture must necessarily result from that prohibition which forbids the general circulation of the inspired writings. Ignorance of the services of the church must accrue from that custom

which causes the worship to be performed in an unknown language. And ignorance of the doctrines of Christianity must naturally arise from the belief in the efficacy of implicit faith. What motive can a man have to inquire, to endeavour to understand his teacher, or to retain the instruction he imparts, if the right of private judgment be taken from him? If the perfection of faith be a blind reliance on the correctness of the church's doctrine,—a reliance which may consist with ignorance of what it teaches, the following reflections will naturally arise: "I am better without knowledge than with it; for a little knowledge may occasion doubt, and lead me into heresy. If I read, I shall think; if I think, I shall reason; if I reason, I shall form my own opinion; my opinion thus acquired, may be contrary to that of my spiritual guides; if publicly expressed, it may expose me to penance in this world; and if not retracted, it may lead to perdition in the next. But while I think nothing, care nothing about the matter, I am safe, I cannot be a heretic; I know nothing but by proxy; but the church knows all, and with the church I leave it."

The uniformity of the Romish church is sometimes extolled by irreligious sceptics, who suppose themselves to be under the exclusive guidance of a philosophic spirit; as well as boasted of by papists themselves. You protestants, say they, are divided into innumerable sects. There is no end of your contentions. It was better before the reformation, when all was peace and unity. Now this is the result of a mistaken view of the nature of that uniformity which the church of Rome secures. The uniformity does not exist, nor did it exist

before the reformation ; that church has ever had its parties, its controversies, and its animosities. Deadly feuds have been cherished in its bosom ; and its disputants have often been seen anathematizing each other without mercy, while appealing to the writings of the fathers, to the authority of doctors of renown, or to the miracles wrought by their friends, in support of the most contradictory assertions.* But even granting that at some past times there was but little religious disputation among the common people in some countries, what was the cause ? The peace was the peace of a burial-place : all were quiet, because all were dead. The uniformity was the uniformity existing in reference to science among a horde of savages, where all are equally ignorant of principles and details. But let it not be supposed that the hostility of the court of Rome to the diffusion of knowledge, is confined to religious theories or religious practices. The influence of popery is hostile to the spread of literary and scientific knowledge, as well as to religious. The spirit of inquiry is repressed ; a dread of the prevalence of an investigating temper prevails ; and an approximation to heresy is sometimes thought to lurk in philosophic speculations. The prohibitory and expurgatory indexes are not exclusively occupied with references to theological books ; they include also works of science, history, politics, and amusement. Books on any of these subjects, even though written by "the faithful," are sometimes treated like the poor sufferer on the

* The countless diversities of doctrine and practice which have been sanctioned in the infallible church, are exhibited to view very fully in Edgar's "Variations of Popery."

bed of Procrustes : what is too short is stretched, and what is too long is lopped away.

“The fact that both popes and bishops of the Roman catholic communion have often patronized knowledge,” says one who has had extraordinary opportunities for learning the spirit of the system on which he animadverts, “is anxiously brought forward to prove the existence of a liberal and enlightened spirit in the Roman church. Now if the conduct of individuals were admitted as a criterion of the temper of their church, it would be easy to produce thousands who have opposed real knowledge for every one that has promoted its interests. Besides, a pope may be a patron of the fine arts, and a determined enemy to philosophical studies. A cardinal or a bishop may spend his savings and fortune in the erection of a college, with a view to perpetuate the metaphysics of the thirteenth century. Such will be found to be the benefactions which learning has generally received from the members of the church of Rome. It is true we owe the preservation of manuscripts to the monks, though it would be difficult to enumerate the multitude of works which were destroyed by their sloth and ignorance. The public schools of Europe were endowed by the liberality of Roman catholics; but if either those that preserved the treasures of ancient literature, or those who founded our universities, had suspected the direction which the human mind would take from the excitement of these mental stimuli, they would have doomed poets, orators, and philosophers to the flames, and flung their endowing money into the sea. I do not blame individuals for partaking the spirit of their age, but must protest against a church which,

having attained the fulness of strength under the influence of the most ignorant ages, would, for the sake of that strength, stop the progress of time, and reduce the nineteenth century to the intellectual standard of the thirteenth. Moral, as well as physical beings, must love their native atmosphere; and Rome being no exception to this law, is still daily employed in renovating and spreading credulity, enthusiasm, and superstition, the elements in which she thrives.”*

Such was the prevailing ignorance at the dawn of the reformation, that accounts transmitted to us by the writers of the times, seem scarcely credible. Many of the priests, it is said, were unable to read their own breviary, though it comprised nearly the whole cyclopædia of their knowledge. The faculty of theology at Paris declared before the assembled parliament, that religion was undone, if the study of Greek and Hebrew were permitted. But a still finer specimen of controversial accuracy and literary skill is afforded us in the account of a monk who gravely assured his auditory, that the reformers had invented a new language called Greek, against which it was necessary for them to be on their guard, it being the mother of all heresy; that a book was written in that language called the New Testament, a book full of daggers and poison; and that as to Hebrew, it was certain that all who learnt it immediately became Jews.

These, however, are tales of former centuries, and insufficient proofs of the state of knowledge

* Practical and Internal Evidence against Catholicism, by the Rev. Joseph Blanco White, M.A., B.D. in the University of Seville; formerly chaplain magistral (preacher) to the king of Spain, p. 154.

among Roman catholics now. It is granted that a spirit of inquiry, which the reformation greatly contributed to produce, has penetrated some dark recesses of superstition, and is producing a favourable change. But alas ! the extent of knowledge, particularly of religious knowledge, in countries in which the papal system is in full operation, is very small. Exceptions may be found, but generally it appears that all wholesome literature is more extensively diffused in protestant states, than in countries entirely catholic. A clergyman, eminent for piety and talents,* having made a tour on several parts of the continent, particularly noticed this circumstance. He speaks of the Valais, a canton of Switzerland, adjoining to Italy, the population of which is exclusively popish ; where 100,000 persons reside, but among whom there was not one bookseller ! A single printer was found living at Sion, the capital of the canton, but he was allowed to work only under the direction of the Jesuits, who have the superintendence of education there ; and printed nothing but popish books of devotion. At Chamberry, in France, a city which contains nearly ten thousand souls, he found a cathedral, and three other churches, two convents, and about one hundred priests ; but only one bookseller, and his stock consisted but of one book,—a code of French laws. “ The town of Domo d’Osola,” he writes, “ has about three thousand inhabitants. There is no bookseller in the place. I mark this fact where it occurs, as drawing after it a thousand consequences. As we entered Italy by Isella, our baggage was searched ;

* The Rev. Daniel Wilson, Bishop of Calcutta.

and the officer told us plainly, the objects he looked after were books of religion and politics; morals are left to themselves. Happily, our passports were signed by the Austrian ambassador, or we should have had to retrace our steps. On driving into the town, I was surprised to see priests, in their peculiar dress, but somewhat shabbily attired, standing about idly, or sitting in the market-place, at the doors of cabarets, in company with the common people. Their jovial careless sort of look, struck me as characteristic of the manners of too many of that order of persons in Italy. The chief church here is of modern Greek architecture; there are three altogether, and about fifteen priests. A convent of Capuchins, suppressed by Napoleon, has just been restored. When we asked the innkeeper what curiosities there were in the town, he said, there was only a Calvary, a superstitious chapel, or temple, on some mountain, with a representation of our Saviour's passion. We are now in Italy; but oh, how fallen is it! oh, how melancholy to think of the lost glory of the queen of nations! Ignorance, poverty, dirt, indolence, misery, vice, superstition, are but too visible on all sides. Half the time, in fact, which God assigned to man for labour, is consumed in superstitious festivals of saints; while the one day of sacred rest is desecrated to folly and sin.*

"Need I say," asks another traveller, "that Italy needs education? When I reached Malta, she had only Martini's Bible with notes, twenty-seven volumes octavo, and a sort of fabulous abridgment or compendium of the Scriptures, got

* Letters from an Absent Brother, vol. ii. p. 101.

up to foster false devotion. Except by the Bible Society, no edition of the inspired volume had, I believe, been provided for the millions of Sicily, Corsica, Sardinia, Calabria, and Italy; nor was there one protestant missionary among all those millions of misled human beings. Into the shops of Italy no bookseller durst receive the unnoted Bible for sale, since this had been, and still is prohibited; and in the Index Prohibitorius may also be seen the titles of some of the best works of Italy and the west.”*

An American clergyman, who was in Rome last summer, wrote thence to the people of his charge in the following terms: “I wish to draw one argument from facts connected with the living world around me, to urge upon you the proper appreciation of the privileges you enjoy. You, every one of you, have the word of God in your houses, and can read in your own mother tongue his wonderful works, those lessons of sacred truth that will make you wise unto salvation. The Bible in Rome is a strange and rare book. The only edition of it authorized to be sold here is in fifteen large volumes, which are filled with popish commentaries. Of course none but the rich can purchase a copy of the sacred Scriptures. Indeed very few of the common people here know what we mean by the Bible. The question was proposed the other day by one of my fellow-lodgers, to the lady from whom our lodgings are obtained, and who may be considered as a fair representative, in point of intelligence and religious information, of the middle class

* A Narrative of the Greek Mission; or Sixteen Years in Malta and Greece, by the Rev. S. S. Wilson.

of society in Rome, 'If the people here generally had a copy of the Bible in their houses?' The reply was, 'Oh yes, all the religious people have.' She also added that she had a very fine copy of the Bible, and immediately went to get it. When produced, it proved to be a mass-book, with here and there a passage of Scripture, accompanied with Romish glosses. When it was more fully explained to her, what we meant by the Bible, she replied, 'Oh, yes, I know what you mean; that book is in several of the libraries in Rome, and some persons who are very religious also have a copy of it.' My dear people, what would you think if such a dearth of the word were to exist among us? A copy of the sacred Scriptures to be found in several libraries in a city containing 150,000 inhabitants! Let me beg of you to love your Bibles more, to read them more, and to be zealous in distributing the word of God."*

These indeed are melancholy facts; but we need not be surprised at their existence. They are but natural consequences of that domination which the Romish clergy assume. Their ascendancy can be maintained more easily over the profoundly ignorant, than over men whose superior intelligence would lead to an examination of ecclesiastical claims. It is to their interest, therefore, that knowledge should be repressed, as it was to the interest of the ancient Philistines that no smith should be found throughout all the land of Israel, lest the Hebrews should make themselves swords and spears.

* The Rev. J. A. Clark, of St. Andrew's Episcopal church, Philadelphia, in a letter to his congregation, dated Rome, March 24, 1838.

But popery has been charged, in the second place, with a tendency to promote irreligion; let us now examine the truth of this accusation. It is not meant that it requires no effort of the body, no homage to the priest, no contribution from the purse; but that the spirit of Christianity may be neglected by the votary of popery, while he attends to its dictates; and that the great ends of religion are rather hindered than assisted by its rites. There are sacrifices which must be made, and painful observances which must be regarded; but they are such as will leave you exposed to the force of the Divine interrogation, "Who hath required this at your hands?" Does a man bow before an altar erected to the honour of the virgin Mary, presenting costly gifts, offering fervent requests, begging her intercession on his behalf? however sincere and earnest he may be, that is not religion. Does a man gaze with unmeaning admiration on the actions of the priest, listening to prayers not a syllable of which he understands, soothed with the solemn music, satiated with odoriferous incense? his senses may be gratified, his spirit may be elated, but that is not religion. Does a man retire from the habitations of his species, to dwell in solitude, a hermit on the bleak top of a lonely mountain, or immuring himself, with others of kindred taste, within the walls of a secluded cloister? it is true that he denies himself some pleasures, but we must not join in plaudits of his piety, for that is not religion. Is a man seen feasting his eyes with the writhing agonies of some helpless fellow-mortal, who is condemned as a heretic, and is consuming in the flames which superstition has kindled round him? though he shout and praise

God loudly for the triumphs of the church, yet that is not religion. Religion is holy; it teaches men to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts," and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" but popery cherishes a spirit of carelessness about those sins which it denominates venial, and opens various marts for pardon, for the convenience of the wealthy lover of iniquity. Religion is devotional; it teaches that God is a Spirit, and that "they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;" but popery is satisfied with acquiescence in its dogmas, and observance of its practices, though the love of God be wanting. Religion is reasonable; it involves an exercise of mind; faith arising from evidence, and trust from knowledge of the excellences of Him in whom confidence is placed; but popery admits men to understand by proxy, and to worship without an acquaintance with the nature of the praises which they utter. Religion conforms the heart of its possessor to the likeness of the Saviour; but popery conceals his character from view.

Referring to a conversation with an Italian lady, a writer already quoted says, "The point I insisted upon was, that the church of Rome had gradually lost the simple and scriptural meaning of each part of Christ's religion, and had substituted a gross external sense instead of it. Thus, for the spiritual invisible church, the outward church of Rome was substituted; and for Christ its Head, the pope; for feeding by faith on the body and blood of Christ, transubstantiation; for repentance, penance; for confession of sins before God, auricular confession to a priest; for prayer to God from the

heart, vain repetitions of pater-nosters; for reverence and honour to the Virgin Mary and the saints, religious and, in fact, idolatrous worship; for secret holy love to the Saviour, images and crucifixes; for reliance on the satisfaction and atonement of Christ only, the sacrifice of the mass, pilgrimages, lacerations, merits of saints, indulgences, purgatory, &c.; and for the influence of the Holy Spirit, merit of congruity, mere external and unassisted efforts, incense, lights ever burning, &c.; and so of all the rest.”*

These ideas, however unfavourable to the Romish church, will not appear unjust, if we consider the manner in which its public services are conducted, and the employments in which the day which should be devoted to God is spent, where all is subject to its unmitigated influence. A sabbath at Milan, where we may expect to find the real tendency of popery exemplified, is thus described by this Christian minister. “I have witnessed to-day, with grief and indignation, all the superstitions of popery in their full triumph. In other towns the neighbourhood of protestantism has been some check on the display of idolatry; but here, in Italy, where a protestant is scarcely tolerated, except in the chapels of ambassadors, all follow the guidance and authority of the pope. At half-past ten this morning we went to the cathedral, where seats were obtained for us in the gallery, near the altar. We saw the whole of the proceedings; priests almost without end; incense, singing, music, processions, perpetual changes of dress; four persons with mitres, whom we were told were

* Letters from an Absent Brother, vol. ii. p. 216.

bishops; a crowd of people coming in and going out, and staring around them; but not one prayer, not one verse of the Holy Scriptures intelligible to the people, not even if they knew Latin, nor one word of a sermon; in short, it was nothing more nor less than a pagan show. We returned to our inn, and after our English service we went to see the catechising. This was founded by Borromeo, in the sixteenth century, and is peculiar to the diocese of Milan. The children meet in classes of ten or twenty, drawn up between the pillars of the vast cathedral, and separated from each other by curtains, the boys on one side, the girls on the other. In all the churches of the city there are classes also. Many grown people were mingled with the children. A priest sat in the midst of each class, and seemed to be explaining familiarly the Christian religion. The sight was quite interesting. Tables for learning to write were placed in different recesses. The children were exceedingly attentive. At the door of each school the words *Pax vobis*, Peace be unto you, were inscribed on a board; the names of the scholars were also on boards. Each school had a small pulpit, with a green cloth in front, bearing the Borromean motto, *humilitas*. Now what can in itself be more excellent than all this? But mark the corruption of popery; these poor children were all made members of a fraternity, and purchase indulgences for their sins by coming to school. A brief of the pope, dated 1609, affords a perpetual indulgence to the children, in a sort of running lease of six thousand years, eight thousand years, &c., and these indulgences are applicable to the recovering souls out of purgatory. Then the

prayers before school are full of error and idolatry. All this I saw with my own eyes, and heard with my own ears ; for I was curious to understand the bearings of these celebrated schools. Thus is the infant mind fettered and chained. Still I do not doubt that much good may be done on the whole : the catholic catechisms contain admirable instructions, and much evangelical matter, though mixed up with folly and superstition. After dinner, at half-past three, we had our second English service, and then were hurried out to see, what you will think incredible in a Christian country, altars set up in the open air to the virgin Mary, with hangings, festoons of lamps, priests offering prayers, the streets hung with lamps on cords stretched across them, the houses and squares gaily adorned with carpets and lights ; the churches open and illuminated, with crowds passing in and out ; while priests were giving relics to kiss to the devotees, who came kneeling at the altar in the most rapid succession ; and soldiers were parading about to keep in order the assembled mobs. I never was so astonished in all my life : religion was, in fact, turned into an open noisy amusement. Before the cathedral itself, there was an amazing crowd to witness punch and his wife, literally punch and his wife. Priests were mingled in the crowd ; and the thing is so much a matter of course, that every picture of this cathedral has, I understand, punch and his auditory in the fore-ground ; thus the farce is kept up throughout this sacred day. And what is all this but the ceremonies of ancient Roman heathenism coloured over with modern Roman Christianity ? The resemblance between popery and paganism, in Italy, strikes every impartial observer. There are the

same prostrations, the same offerings, the same incense, the same processions, the same votive tablets, the same adoration of images, the same vows, pomps, revellings, &c.; the names of things only are changed. And oh, what a lamentable, what a heart-breaking reflection is it, that the sabbath is quite unknown here as the day of sanctification and holy rest! Doubtless in so vast a population there are many secret disciples of the Lord Christ, who ‘sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof;’ but to the mass of the people the Sunday is forgotten, obliterated, lost; nay, it is turned into the very worst day of all the week; no idea enters their minds of the Divine purpose and mercy in it. ‘I gave them my sabbaths to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.’ I should conceive there are but very, very few Bibles amongst all this population of one hundred and fifty thousand souls. Oh what do protestant countries owe to Luther, Calvin, Zuingle, Cranmer, Ridley, Knox, &c., who, under God, rescued them from similar darkness! and what obligations are they under to walk in the light whilst they have it!”*

One more extract from the same enlightened observer may be advantageously given, as it contains several suggestions which deserve serious reflection. “It is, moreover, very observable,” he remarks, “that where popery is now reviving in its influence, after the French revolutionary struggles, or the iron laws of Bonaparte, it returns with all its folly about it. It is not learning a lesson of

* Letters from an Absent Brother, vol. ii. p. 122.

wisdom, and silently following its Pascals and Fénelons, and dropping some of its grosser corruptions, but reassumes all its arts, its impositions, its ceremonies, its incense, its processions, its pilgrimages, its image worship, its exclusive claims, its domination over the conscience, its opposition to the Scriptures, its hatred of education; and this in the full face of day, and in the nineteenth century, and with infidelity watching for objections to our common Christianity: and what is the general moral effect of this system? It neither sanctifies nor saves. A depth of vice, glossed over with outward forms of decency, eats as doth a canker. Voluptuousness, impurity, dishonesty, cunning, hypocrisy, every vice prevails, just as popery has the more complete sway. The dreadful profanation of the sabbath has, by prescription, become fixed; all the holy ends of it are forgotten, unknown, obliterated; it is the habitual season of unrestrained pleasure. I speak generally; for there are doubtless multitudes of individual catholics who serve God in sincerity and truth, and who, disregarding the accumulations heaped on the foundation of the faith, build on Jesus Christ and him crucified. There is one class of persons in catholic countries which I compassionate from my heart. They are not sunk into superstition, nor have they imbibed the piety of true disciples of Christ; but having been educated during the revolution, have acquired a general boldness and liberality of sentiment; see through much of the mummery of popery, detect the spirit and aims of a worldly-minded priesthood, are disgusted at the revival of the Jesuits, the opposition to the Bible Society, the resistance to education, the disturbance and removal of the most

pious and worthy masters and professors, the persecution of the protestants, &c.; and yet they are not in earnest enough about religion to take a decided part; the objections of infidels dwell upon their minds, the fear of reproach prevents their quitting the Roman communion, there is nothing in the protestantism they are acquainted with to show them a more excellent way. Thus they glide down the fatal stream with others, dissatisfied, and yet unconverted."*

Is there now any investigator who thinks it is too much to affirm that popery tends to irreligion? Is there any thing in the sort of service here described which can be acceptable to the pure, the heart-searching Maker? Is there any thing in this adapted to transform the spirit, to change the bias of the soul, to withdraw the affections from earth, and to prepare for the spiritual delights of heaven? Is there any thing here to produce reliance on the providential care of God, patient submission to afflictive dispensations, ardent gratitude for favours received, or universal benevolence to mankind? All is form, routine, pomp, amusement; humility and love, faith and spiritual-mindedness, are neither possessed nor sought. There may be zeal, but it is zeal without knowledge; there may be confidence, but it is confidence without basis; there may be joy, but it is not joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom only we can receive atonement.

Justice cannot be done to this part of our subject without adverting to some peculiar temptations to which the Romish clergy are exposed, by the disci-

* Letters from an Absent Brother, vol. ii. p. 254.

pline which their church enjoins. Whatever tends to the production of vicious conduct in the ministers of religion, or even to the excitement of corrupt emotions in their hearts, is so evidently adapted to nullify their best services, and to demoralize those who are committed to their care, that little need be said to show that this view of the Romish system is of the greatest importance. But, exciting as this topic always is when adduced in controversy, and sincere as are the disclaimers of some respectable members of the Romish priesthood of any unhallowed effects upon themselves, it will not be doubted by any one who reads for the first time the instructions for confession contained in their authorised books of devotion, that in a very large proportion of cases deplorable results must ensue to the confessor, to the penitent, or to both. The records of history furnish indubitable evidence that the sacrament of penance, as it is called, has been in past ages awfully and extensively abused; and some who have been experimentally acquainted with the practical workings of the system in our own times, have given similar testimony. The following is the language of one who was formerly chaplain to Ferdinand VII. of Spain.

“Of monks and friars I know comparatively little, because the vague suspicions, of which even the most pious Spanish parents cannot divest themselves, prevented my frequenting the interior of monasteries during boyhood. My own judgment, and the general disgust which the prevailing grossness and vulgarity of the regulars create in those who daily see them, kept me subsequently away from all friendly intercourse with the cowed tribes: but of the secular clergy, and the amiable

life-prisoners of the church of Rome, few, if any, can possess a more intimate knowledge than myself. Devoted to the ecclesiastical profession from the age of fifteen, when I received the minor orders, I lived in constant friendship with the most distinguished youths who, in my town, were preparing for the priesthood. Men of the first eminence in the church were the old friends of my family—my parents' and my own spiritual directors. Thus I grew up, thus I continued in manhood, till, at the age of five-and-thirty, religious oppression, and that alone, forced me away from kindred and country. The intimacy of friendship, the undisguised converse of sacramental confession, opened to me the hearts of many, whose exterior conduct might have deceived a common observer. The coarse frankness of associate dissoluteness left, indeed, no secrets among the spiritual slaves, who, unable to separate the laws of God from those of their tyrannical church, trampled both under foot in riotous despair. Such are the sources of the knowledge I possess: God, sorrow, and remorse, are my witnesses.

“A more blameless, ingenuous, religious set of youths than that in the enjoyment of whose friendship I passed the best years of my life, the world cannot boast of. Eight of us, all nearly of the same age, lived in the closest bond of affection from sixteen till one-and-twenty; and four, at least, continued in the same intimacy till about thirty-five. Of this knot of friends not one was tainted by the breath of gross vice till the church had doomed them to a life of celibacy, and turned the best affections of their hearts into crime. It is the very refinement of church cruelty to say they were

free when they deprived themselves of their natural rights. Less, indeed, would be the unfeelingness of a parent who, watching a moment of ungenerous excitement, would deprive a son of his birth-right, and doom him, by a voluntary act, to pine away through life in want and misery. A virtuous youth of one-and-twenty, who is made to believe Christian perfection inseparable from a life of celibacy, will easily overlook the dangers which beset that state of life. Those who made, and those who still support the unnatural law, which turns the mistaken piety of youth into a source of future vice, ought to have learnt mercy from their own experience; but a priest who has waded, as most do, through the miry slough of a life of incessant temptation, falling and rising, stumbling, struggling, and falling again, without at once casting off catholicism with Christianity, contracts, generally, habits of mind not unlike those of the guards of oriental beauty. Their hearts have been seared with envy.

“I cannot think on the wanderings of the friends of my youth without heart-rending pain. One, now no more, whose talents raised him to one of the highest dignities of the church of Spain, was for many years a model of Christian purity. When, by the powerful influence of his mind and the warmth of his devotion, this man had drawn many into the clerical and the religious life (my youngest sister among the latter), he sunk at once into the grossest and most daring profligacy. I heard him boast that, the night before the solemn procession of *corpus Christi*, where he appeared nearly at the head of his chapter, one of *two* children had been born, which his two concubines

brought to light within a few days of each other. The intrigues of ambition soon shared his mind with the pursuit of pleasure; and the fall of a potentate, whom he took the trouble to instruct in the policy of Machiavel, involved him in danger and distress for a time. He had risen again into court influence, when death cut him off in the flower of life. I had loved him when both our minds were pure; I loved him when catholicism had driven us both from the path of virtue; I still love, and will love his memory, and hope that God's mercy has pardoned his life of sin, without imputing it to the abettors of the barbarous laws which occasioned his spiritual ruin.

“Such, more or less, has been the fate of my early friends, whose minds and hearts were much above the common standard of the Spanish clergy. What, then, need I say of the vulgar crowd of priests, who, coming, as the Spanish phrase has it, from *coarse swaddling clothes*, and raised by ordination to a rank of life for which they have not been prepared, mingle vice and superstition, grossness of feeling and pride of office, in their character? I have known the best among them; I have heard their confessions; I have heard the confessions of young persons of both sexes, who fell under the influence of their suggestions and example; and I do declare that nothing can be more dangerous to youthful virtue than their company. How many souls would be saved from crime, but for the vain display of pretended superior virtue, which Rome demands of her clergy! * * * *

“The cares of a married life, it is said, interfere with the duties of the clergy. Do not the cares of a vicious life, the anxieties of stolen love, the con-

trivances of adulterous intercourse, the pains, the jealousies, the remorse, attached to a conduct in perfect contradiction with a public and solemn profession of superior virtue—do not these cares, these bitter feelings, interfere with the duties of the priesthood? I have seen the most promising men of my university obtain country vicarages, with characters unimpeached, and hearts overflowing with hopes of usefulness. A virtuous wife would have confirmed and strengthened their purposes; but they were to live a life of angels in celibacy. They were, however, men, and their duties connected them with beings of no higher description. Young women knelt before them in all the intimacy and openness of confession. A solitary home made them go abroad in search of social converse. Love, long resisted, seized them, at length, like madness. Two I knew who died insane: hundreds might be found who avoid that fate by a life of settled systematic vice.

“The picture of female convents requires a more delicate pencil: yet I cannot find tints sufficiently dark and gloomy to portray the miseries which I have witnessed in their inmates. Crime, indeed, makes its way into those recesses, in spite of the spiked walls and prison grates, which protect the inhabitants. This I know with all the certainty which the self-accusation of the guilty can give. It is, besides, a notorious fact, that the nunneries of Estremadura and Portugal are frequently infected with vice of the grossest kind. But I will not dwell on this revolting part of the picture. The greater part of the nuns whom I have known, were beings of a much higher description; females whose purity owed nothing to the strong gates and high

walls of the cloister; but who still had a human heart, and felt, in many instances, and during a great portion of their lives, the weight of the vows which had deprived them of their liberty. Some there are, I confess, among the nuns, who, like birds hatched in a cage, never seem to long for freedom: but the happiness boasted of in convents is generally the effect of an honourable pride of purpose, supported by a sense of utter hopelessness." *

It was remarked in the third place, that popery tends to produce infidelity; and after what has been advanced, it will not be necessary to say much to corroborate this assertion. No well-informed person needs to be apprised that infidelity prevails on the continent of Europe in a very great degree. It is a notorious historical fact, that in a neighbouring country, a few years ago, its abettors gained the ascendancy and established it by law. They abolished the sabbath; prohibited Christian ordinances; proclaimed death to be a perpetual sleep, decreed that the being of God was a fable; and set up an infamous woman to be worshipped as the goddess of reason! And now though the name of Christ is again pronounced with respect by the rulers of that country, and the Romish church reinstated in its honours, it is well known that in France, in Spain, in Portugal, and in Italy, the greater part of educated men are either sceptics or confirmed unbelievers.†

* Blanco White's Practical and Internal Evidence against Catholicism, p. 132—139.

† "The prevalence of irreligion in France is very generally known and mentioned, but may need to be considered more closely both for a scrutiny of the common

But it will be asked, Why charge this on popery? It is because the principles and practices of popery are calculated to produce it! Infidelity has been called, not inaptly, popery run to seed. With a certain degree of light, a degree not unfrequently occurring, a thinking man in a popish country is likely to renounce all veneration for the Christian name. He has to judge of Christianity only by

opinion, and for a more due impression of the painful truth. We are not to forget that the same unbelief or neglect exists widely in other continental nations, and that much of it is observable even in our own; so that the question is comparative. But there are, doubtless, among the French, ample indications of its greater extent. The almost exclusive attendance, on many occasions, of women in their churches, is of itself nearly a decisive one; except we should suppose that among men a distaste for the priestly character, and for some parts of the Romish ceremonial, alone occasioned this sort of tacit non-conformity and withdrawal. But there is great reason to fear that their absence from outward observances is generally accompanied and excused by a sort of vague and nominal deism; and this even in some instances where the parties have openly attached themselves to the protestant body.

“The probability of finding among any given number of the French whom you may meet, even a small proportion who express personal regard for religion, is far less than in other continental countries. On our own roads or coasts, a Christian, happily, will seldom pass days in the coach, or hours in the steam-vessel, without meeting some one who appears sincerely a Christian also, or at the least, expresses respect for revelation and religious practice. But in several journeys through parts of France, I do not call to mind (unless the conversation of priests were to be reckoned an exception) more than one individual who expressed a decided religious belief and feeling. I have heard the importance of religion for the body of the nation allowed, and its decays regretted; but without

what he sees and hears. The Christianity of the Romish church is the only species of Christianity within his cognizance. With the Christianity of the New Testament he is unacquainted. He does not possess the Scriptures; they are prohibited and scarce; nor have his religious instructors ever suggested the idea that the inspired writings contain the principles of Christian faith. If among us any

any proof that the educated speaker admitted its truth, or for himself and his own class, felt its value. This sort of negative estimate, however, might be very inconclusive, founded as it is of course on a small number of instances. But the positive examples, even though they may be few, are more decisive, for if when conversation has been led to this point, we have found almost all either intimate incredulity, or betray an absolute indifference, we can hardly hope to have fallen upon almost none but exceptions or infrequent cases. This would be more unlikely (especially when the parties were from divers classes and provinces) than that a gamester should throw the dice nineteen times out of twenty with the very same result. In speaking with the wife of a respectable Parisian tradesman (while my friends examined some article for purchase) I found her to be a native of our island, though many years a resident in France. This opening made the question easy—protestant or Roman catholic? And the answer was in substance as follows: ‘I was brought up in England a catholic, but I own that I am now neither. I have seen and known so much to induce doubt and distaste with regard to religion, that I have ceased to believe it, and do not now pay any regard to its forms.’ This was said not with an air of levity, but rather of dissatisfaction. A reply from me, on the necessity of religion to real comfort, drew forth the passing acknowledgment—‘I have suffered much,’ but accompanied with an intimation that want of belief must preclude the consolation which religion promises.”—*Cursory views of the state of Religion in France, occasioned by a Journey in 1837; by John Sheppard.*

begin to question the divinity of our religion, we immediately appeal to the book of God: consider, we say, the purity of its spirit, the consistency of its parts, the sublimity of its representations, its correspondence with the heart of man, and its adaptation to his necessities. But to all these marks of its heavenly original, the doubting Romanist is necessarily a stranger. Even the external evidence of its authenticity has been withheld; it has been considered enough for him to know that it has the sanction of the church. But in truth he has never been taught to think about it, nor is any reference to it so prominent in the sort of Christianity with which he is conversant, as to cause it to attract his attention. The only means he has of judging of the religion of Jesus Christ is what he sees and hears from the Romish clergy. What is it then that is to satisfy his scruples, or excite his faith? Is it the pompous ceremonial, the mummery without meaning, or the adoration of deceased fellow-mortals? Is it the bloody persecutions of which history informs him, or the intolerant temper which he witnesses in his spiritual guides? Is it the detected priestcraft, the sham miracles, the solemn grimace, or the ridiculous legend? Is it the notoriously licentious conduct of many of the priests around him, their rapacity and their pride? Is it the manifest dependence of the whole system on secular power, and the evident tendency of its institutions to aggrandize the clergy at the expense of men of every other rank? All these things tend to disgust him, and to alienate his heart. All seems to him to be worldly, and he is right in the opinion. Hypocrisy appears to him to shine through the veil of solemn splendour, and we cannot wonder at

his decision. Nor will it cost him any considerable effort to shake off the yoke. It is only to cease from external observances, or to go through them for reputation and safety sake, with outward regularity and mental indifference. The transition is not great from assent without evidence, to unbelief; from ignorant acquiescence in the truth of Scripture, to positive rejection of its authority. It would not cost the infidels of Britain much to embrace popery; the mutation would be small; they might retain their present antipathy to the Bible; they might hate the advocate of missions and the minister of the gospel as cordially as ever; they need not subjugate their passions, or receive with humility and gratitude unmerited pardon from a compassionate and holy Saviour; they might bend the knee, and receive absolution, leave theology to priests, and live as irreligiously as they could wish to live. Nor does an ignorant Romanist do much violence to his feelings by becoming an unbeliever; he has only to shake off his prejudices, for reasons for his faith he does not possess: he believes because the church believes, not on account of evidence; he has only to get rid of his terrors, for love to God his system is not adapted to inspire: he has only to relinquish external forms, for spirituality was before dispensed with. The heart of an ungodly man must be changed, whatever his creed or profession may be, before he will love God, trust in Christ, desire holiness, live by faith, and delight in heavenly objects; but no renovation of spirit is necessary to convert a worldly man from superstition to infidelity, or from infidelity to compliance with forms and ceremonials.

Testimony corroborates this reasoning. The

Spanish clergyman to whom we have just referred, asserts that "wherever the religion of Rome reigns absolute, there is but one step between it and complete infidelity." He adds, "I have stated as a general fact what I have seen invariably happen in my native country; what all inhabitants of Roman catholic countries, in every part of the world, with whom I have been acquainted in the course of my life, have confirmed to me, both as witnesses and as instances. I hope I can give good reasons, and probable explanations of this moral phenomenon; but, to a mind deeply impressed by the experience of the fact, they must all appear tame and lifeless. As I cannot, however, communicate the impressions themselves, I request, that in case my theory should appear unsatisfactory, it may not be allowed to weaken my testimony.

"The tendency of Roman catholic Christianity to produce complete and sudden infidelity arises, in the first place, from its exclusiveness. A Romanist is, from infancy, taught, as an article of faith, that popery and Christianity are identical. He must, therefore, be prepared to reject the gospel revelation, the moment he shall find cause to reject popery.

"A Roman catholic is also taught to believe in the infallibility of the church as an essential part of Christianity. He must therefore reject Christianity, upon being convinced of the existence of a single error in his church's creed.

"With these rooted prejudices, and under the regular and established ignorance of the Bible, which the Romanist system encourages, how is it possible that the doubts of the bolder minds should be properly and exclusively directed to the false

foundation on which Rome has fixed the gospel? The last thing which discipline gives to the intellect, is the power and habit of discrimination; will that discrimination be expected in the Romanist school of religion, where men are most anxiously accustomed to see Christianity as a whole, a system which cannot exist but by a miraculous kind of attraction, of which the pope with the church is the centre? It is said that Henry IV. of France excused his change to the Romanist persuasion by the childish argument, that since both protestants and catholics agreed that salvation might be obtained in the church of Rome, whilst that church denied the benefits of redemption to protestants, it was most prudent to embrace a faith, the sufficiency of which was denied by no party. The thoroughbred Romanist abroad, who finds an insuperable objection to any one article of the papal creed, and is consequently forced to disbelieve the infallibility of his church, carries the calculating argument of the French king still farther. If (says he) the best of these two chances of salvation is grounded on clear error; if the infallibility on which I reposed is a fiction, why should I trouble myself at all about religion?

“I will not, however, fatigue the reader with speculations upon a matter of experience. I repeat that, according to my own observation, the transition from Romanism to infidelity is sudden and violent. It is certainly so in Spain: if Roman catholics, in countries where other forms of Christianity exist, are more disposed to pause and examine before they reject Christianity, they owe it to the political circumstances which check the effect of the Romanist principles in their minds. Rome,

certainly, by her intolerant and exclusive spirit, by identifying herself with Christ, does every thing in her power to exclude from the minds of her members the idea of any spiritual advantage, except in a complete surrender of the understanding to her. According to her decisions, there is no salvation for such as would believe all her doctrines, but not upon her own authority. What is this but teaching men, that if they leave the pope, it is a matter of indifference, in regard, at least, to the next world, whether they become protestants or atheists?"*

It is not unjust then to assert that it is the tendency of the Romish system to promote ignorance, irreligion, and infidelity. As lovers of knowledge, of piety, and of scriptural faith, we cannot view with indifference the extension of popish influence, but must desire its annihilation.

Let us however not forget our own condition while deploring that of others. It is possible that there are professed protestants whose doom will in the day of judgment be less tolerable than that of the inhabitants of Chambery or of Milan. Woe to the unbelieving cities to which abundant instruction has been afforded! Peculiar advantages require peculiar proficiency. If death should find us ignorant, irreligious, or unbelieving, we cannot plead in extenuation at the bar of God, that we dwelt in a popish country, that the Scriptures were locked up from our perusal, and that we were destitute of the means of grace.

Let us then value our privileges, not as the miser values his hoard, but as the faithful steward

* Blanco White's Internal and Practical Evidence, pp. 225—229.

values what is entrusted to his care, employing it in the service of the donor. Let us value them as the sinking patient values the specific which a skilful physician has prescribed for his relief. Let us value them as a dying sinner exposed to everlasting vengeance for his depravity and guilt, may justly value tidings of mercy and of sanctifying grace.

“ See that ye despise not Him that speaketh.” Believe the faithful saying, “ He who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.” Jesus Christ is preached to you in the gospel as “ wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” These are blessings which you need; turn your eyes to him, as the Friend of sinners and the chosen of the Almighty Father.

And let those who truly prize the Saviour, make him known to others. Use your most strenuous efforts to direct the attention of your fellow-mortals to the faithful saying which is worthy of all acceptance, that “ Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Teach them that “ he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Teach them that “ he his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.” What is the tendency of this doctrine? Is it to promote ignorance? Far from it! It makes known the counsels of eternal wisdom, displays the character of the unseen, inaccessible Creator, and holds out to our contemplation those exhilarating mysteries into which angelic intelligences desire to look. Does it promote irreligion? No! It demonstrates

the intrinsic evil of sin in the magnitude of the compensation; it shows the worth of the soul by exhibiting incarnate Deity as its ransom; it teaches the importance of holiness, by the purity of the victim it reveals, and the greatness of the sufferings it unfolds. Will it promote infidelity? No! It speaks to conscience in a voice so audible that few can hear it without emotion, unless accustomed to despise it; and it holds forth to the dying transgressor the inviting prospect of eternal life. Its tendency is to excite hope in the disconsolate bosom, by unveiling the compassions of God; to kindle a flame of holy love in the long-lost prodigal, by showing the readiness of the Father to receive him to his arms; to sanctify the heart of the depraved offender, by revealing reasons for repentance founded on the conduct of the offended sovereign; and to lead the proud and impious boaster to adore the riches of unparalleled grace, saying, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." It is adapted to reduce the rebel to obedience; to endue the foolish with the most important wisdom; to make the ruffian kind, and the selfish liberal; to bring honour to God, the bountiful Creator; and to diffuse purity and peace, humility and gratitude among all his creatures. May we all discern its glories, receive its consolations, and exhibit its beneficial effects!

LECTURE VI.

ON THE MEANS WHICH SHOULD BE ADOPTED
TO SUBVERT IT.

“Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not ; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully ; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man’s conscience, in the sight of God.”—2 *Cor.* iv. 1, 2.

A BRIEF recapitulation of what has been advanced in former lectures will prepare the mind for the investigation which remains.

These three principles have been exhibited, as the fundamental tenets of the popish system : the first, the insufficiency of the Scriptures to be the Christian rule of faith and practice ; the second, the right of the Romish clergy to supply the deficiency, by authoritatively fixing the doctrines to be believed, and the precepts to be observed ; the third, the supremacy of the bishop of Rome over all other ministers, and over all Christian people.

The representations given of popish worship have included the following particulars : That the public services of the church are conducted in a language which the people in general do not understand ; that much of the worship is addressed to creatures, rather than to the Creator ; that the

worship offered to God is frequently presented in the name of intercessors whom he has not authorised, and in dependence on the merits of sinful mortals; that the appointments of Jesus Christ are perverted from their original design; and that the church of Rome has instituted many ceremonies, and sanctioned many practices, altogether foreign from the spirit of Christianity.

The system has been described as tyrannical, because it requires belief without evidence, and even in opposition to the plainest testimony of the senses; because it withholds from the people the means of acquiring spiritual knowledge; because it demands an exposure of every man's acts and thoughts to an ecclesiastical spy; because it assumes authority to inflict punishment on persons of all ranks and classes; and because it undertakes to restrain or castigate, by terror, by imprisonment, and by death, those who disclaim the Christian religion entirely, as pagans, Jews, and infidels; and those who acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord, but do not submit to the decisions of the bishop of Rome.

The origin of this system has been traced to a worldly spirit which gained the ascendancy in the Christian church, and especially took possession of the hearts of its ministers; which operated in some degree in the earliest ages, but grew to maturity, and produced its poisonous fruits in large abundance, soon after the Roman emperor, Constantine, and his successors, took Christianity under their patronage; till, at length, nearly all Christendom was subjected to the despotism of the ecclesiastics.

Its tendency has also been examined; and it has been shown, both from reason and from fact,

that it is adapted to promote ignorance, irreligion, and infidelity. Proof has been adduced that it is calculated to do all that a system of delusion, of hypocrisy, and of priestcraft can, to bring into contempt the religion of Him who died upon the cross, to dishonour God, to loosen the bonds of civil society, to debase the intellect, and to destroy the soul.

With these views, the subversion of the Romish system is an object to which we are bound to direct our desires. It is not enough that we should seek to check its progress, to confine it to its present territories, or to reduce its present power. It behoves us to aim at its entire annihilation. May the day soon dawn when it shall live only in the pages of history! As Hannibal, led to the Carthaginian altar by his father, was made to swear eternal enmity to the ambitious metropolis of the world, in its days of warlike paganism, so let every follower of the truth proclaim interminable hostilities against the *system* of which that city is the palladium,—hostilities that shall never cease, till every vestige of its ascendancy shall have disappeared from the earth. The individuals who are subject to its sway are indeed objects of compassion and benevolent feeling; nothing should be done to injure them. But charity itself requires the adoption of measures adapted gradually to undermine, and eventually to destroy, the pernicious system by which they are enslaved. In proportion to our dislike to Romish superstition and tyranny, ought to be our diligence in the use of all fair and Christian means to destroy them.

In the first place, we should make strenuous exertions to disseminate scriptural knowledge.

Error can never be counteracted so effectually as by the promulgation of truth ; and as the errors of the church of Rome are grossly opposed to the letter and spirit of the inspired book, an acquaintance with its contents, and familiarity with its instructions, must be the most effectual preservative against the fallacious claims and pernicious customs of that apostate community. Make known to a man the Bible doctrine of salvation through faith in an adorable Redeemer, who gave himself a ransom for us, and compassionately invites the unworthiest to receive from his hands free pardon and a new heart ; and if the hearer receive the truth in the love of it, he will not seek forgiveness from papal indulgences, priestly absolutions, and painful penances. Make known the Bible doctrine of Christian liberty ; the directions of Jesus Christ to his disciples to regard each other as brethren, to call no man master, nor be themselves called Rabbi, Matt. xxiii. 8 ; the assertions of Paul that the holy Scriptures are able to make men wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. iii. 15 ; and he who receives this doctrine as Divine, will not be likely to embrace the injurious notion of implicit faith, or to surrender his soul to the authoritative direction of any confessor or any cardinal. Make known the Bible doctrine of benevolence, charity, forbearance, and humble imitation of the lowly Saviour ; teach the importance of his declaration that his kingdom was not of this world, John xviii. 36, and his prohibition of the use of carnal weapons in the heavenly warfare ; and he who sees the evidence and the beauty of these sentiments, and is actuated by them as Divine truths, will not be transformed

into a familiar of the inquisition. Make known the jealousy which the Most High expresses of all human inventions in his worship; the spirituality of the adoration he requires, and the beautiful simplicity of gospel institutions; and these ideas will effectually caution men against those splendid mockeries of divinity, those imposing ceremonies which the church of Rome has decreed, but which the Searcher of hearts cannot possibly approve. If our countrymen who visit the cathedrals of the continent, and gaze with amazement at the pomp and majesty of popish worship, in which every sense is wrought upon, till they feel an excitement which they mistake for devotion, were but previously well grounded in these truths; if they were conversant even with the rudiments of gospel doctrine, and felt its influence on their hearts; if they had a lively impression of that jealousy which inspired history, as well as inspired declarations, attributes to Jehovah; the dangers to which their situation exposes them would be greatly lessened; they would view with widely different feelings the splendour and magnificence of the scene. Instead of admiration, disgust would be excited in their bosoms; and sentiments of pity would take possession of their hearts, while they remembered with compassionate anxiety the consequences which befel the sons of Aaron, when they offered "strange fire unto the Lord, which the Lord commanded not." Such protestant spectators of popish worship, seeing the palpable imitation of pagan rites which it exhibits, would ruminate with deep emotion on the language of the Almighty to the Jews: "Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from

before thee, and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods, for even their sons and their daughters have they burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it," Deut. xii. 32. But alas! great numbers of them know but little of that faith to which they make an hereditary claim; its principles they have never studied with any care; and with the language of the holy oracles they have but a slight acquaintance. They scarcely know that if we worship God acceptably, we must worship him according to his own appointments, in spirit and in truth; they do not reflect, that "our God is a consuming fire." They see what fascinates the imagination, and they are prepared to think favourably of a religion so tasteful, so imposing, and so dignified; and they are ready to listen to the sophisms of the first Jesuit who introduces himself to their society. The more ignorant a man is of scriptural religion, the more likely is he to be seduced by the gaudy aspect and flattering promises of popery; but the more generally the knowledge and love of the pure gospel is diffused, the further will popery be compelled to retreat before the light of Divine truth, into the recesses of its den of darkness.

And it is important, if these views are correct, that all men should be encouraged to fetch their water pure from the heavenly fountain. If you keep them dependent on any human authority, or the commandments of any body of men, for their

knowledge, the step is very short to dependence on the popish clergy. In either case, the state is the same, it is a state of dependence; there is only a change of instructors; in either case they are slaves; there is only a change of masters. The way to emancipate them from all spiritual shackles, is to give them the inspired volume. Hence the importance of those exertions made by benevolent persons, to teach the children of the poorest to read. No acts of parliament, no protestant confederations, can form so strong a barrier against popery in this country, as the ability of every man to read the Scriptures, and the possession of a Bible by every reader. It is not, however, education itself that will afford security against the arts of Romish persuasion; it is rather the knowledge of Bible truth, which education rightly directed, assists men to acquire. The Bible and popery are two masters whom it is impossible to serve together; they cannot even exist in immediate contact: the Bible will destroy popery, or popery will destroy the Bible. The insufficiency of the Scriptures, and the right of the Romish clergy to rule our faith, the two main pillars of the Romish system, must give way, if the laity read that book which it is admitted came from God, and which expressly declares that it is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Wonder not at the agitation and dismay excited in the conclave of Rome, by the operations of that noble institution which offers the Scriptures, without note or comment, to all classes in Britain, and to all the nations of the world. It sees in the free circulation of the Scriptures the

sure presage of its own downfall. The pathetic lamentations which have recently appeared in papal addresses on this subject, remind us of the language of Job respecting the perpetrators of atrocious crimes: "They know not the light, for the morning is to them even as the shadows of death." But much as they hate the dawn, it is in vain to oppose it; the sun will rise, although they curse its beams. "As James and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth;" but their deceptions shall not always succeed; their incantations shall fail; their triumphs shall terminate; and "their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was."

The history of the past demonstrates that the anxiety with which the rulers of the Romish church contemplate the extending circulation of the Scriptures, is not unfounded. In the early part of the sixteenth century, the translation of the New Testament by Luther did more than any thing else to promote the reformation in Germany. "The publication of it," says a calm historian, "proved more fatal to the church of Rome, than that of all his own works. It was read with wonderful avidity and attention by persons of every rank. They were astonished at discovering how contrary the precepts of the Author of our religion are to the inventions of those priests who pretended to be his vicegerents; and having now in their hands the rule of faith, they thought themselves qualified, by applying it, to judge of the established opinions, and to pronounce when they were conformable to the standard, or when they departed from it."* Similar

* Robertson's Reign of Charles V.

results ensued from the magnanimous determination of Tyndale, that if God would spare his life for a few years, the plough-boys of England should know more of the Scriptures than was known by many Romish divines. In voluntary exile and poverty, that truly illustrious man completed a translation of the New Testament, which, if it be not so well attuned to a modern ear as that which we are accustomed to use, has the merit of being eminently faithful, idiomatic, and perspicuous, and is the basis of all subsequent English versions. This first printed English Testament, imported by stealth,* retained in peril, read in secrecy,† enlightened the minds of thousands, and

* "Necessity drove the reformers to a secret circulation of these silent destroyers of popery; notwithstanding the active exertions of More, Wolsey, and Tonstall to prevent it, they were extensively distributed. Richard Herman, a mechanic of the staple at Antwerp, was a considerable exporter of the prohibited books to England, at a great sacrifice of his fortune. Dr. Barnes and Mr. Fish dispersed them in London, Mr. Garret at Oxford, and pious reformers in every part of the kingdom; all this was done in confidence seldom betrayed."—*Memoir of William Tyndale, by George Offor, prefixed to his New Testament, published by Bagster.*

† "In January, 1527, the bishop proceeded into Essex to discover how far his injunction had been obeyed. His course was marked with horror: many poor prisoners for heresy were examined before him. . . . Awful were the torments inflicted upon those who, in disobedience to the proclamation, dared to read this proscribed book. An aged labourer, father Harding, was seen reading by a wood side, while his more fashionable neighbours were gone to hear mass. His house was broken open, and under the flooring were discovered English books of holy Scripture. The poor old man was hurried to prison, and thence to the stake, where he was brutally treated, and his body burnt to ashes. The rigour with which these

was the main instrument in producing a national movement which neither princes nor ecclesiastics could restrain. Many suffered imprisonment and death for perusing the holy record. Many learned

books were suppressed, naturally excited a strong desire to possess them; it was also calculated to awaken an intense interest in examining their contents. Imminent danger attending the enjoyment of religious observances, has a tendency to exalt the mind to the happiest state of feeling which those privileges are capable of producing. Such must have been the case with poor old Harding, who had been imprisoned some years before, on the charge of heresy, and knew that there was no mercy extended to a second offence; yet in secret, by the wood side, with the Testament in his hand, he took repeated draughts of the water of life; or secluded in his humble cottage, he raised the floor, found the precious, but forbidden book, and richly enjoyed the heavenly food. With excited feelings, he might imagine that the voice of the inspired writer was peculiarly addressed to him, "Eat, O friend! drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved!" The most powerful or learned of men might envy such moments, enjoyed by a poor old persecuted labourer. Many were fined, imprisoned, and put to death for reading the New Testament. Lawrence Staple was persecuted, in 1531, for concealing four copies in his sleeve, and giving them to Bilney, who was burnt. Staple saved his life by abjuring. The sentence of the court of star chamber upon John Tyndale, a merchant of London, a brother of the martyr, and Thomas Patmore, a merchant, was mild, in comparison with that on Harding. It was, that each of them should be set upon a horse, and their faces to the horse's tail, to have papers upon their heads, and upon their gowns or cloaks, to be tacked or pinned, with the said New Testaments and other books, and at the standard in Chepe, should be made a great fire, whereinto every one of them should throw their said books, and further to abide such fines, to be paid to the king, as should be assessed upon them. The fine, according to Fox, was to a ruinous amount. What a spectacle

to read, that they might avail themselves of the newly-furnished revelation. Such was the prevalent desire to obtain the heavenly volume, that sixteen editions of the whole Bible were in the course of seven years, disposed of. When the public use of the Scriptures was permitted in the churches, great numbers resorted thither daily to read or hear them, and it was customary to select one whose voice adapted him for the service, to read for the benefit of the listening crowd. Thus was a light enkindled which has never been extinguished, and a spirit excited which prepared men to suffer at the stake, rather than consent to be again enveloped in Romish darkness.

On the continent of Europe, there is indeed a large sphere for British benevolence, and in some places, at least, it exhibits an inviting aspect. A gentleman, known by his previous writings,* who has recently published some observations on the State of Religion in France, occasioned by a tour in that country, mentions a variety of facts which encourage attempts to circulate the Scriptures even among those who are forbidden to peruse them. He admits that "the opposition of the Romish clergy to the diffusion of the Scriptures and tracts, is in many places violent, both from the

to the citizens! two of their wealthy and honourable Lombard merchants treated with indignities, imprisonment, and fine, for having the New Testament in their possession! In mercy, the progress of the reformation was slow: had it been a rapid revolution, the spirit of retaliation might have produced most awful consequences."

—*Memoir, ut supra*, p. 28—30.

* John Sheppard, Esq. author of *Thoughts on Devotion*, &c.

pulpit and the press. The prohibition of reading or possessing them, is rendered extensively effectual by the obligation of confession ; since one of the express matters of inquiry from the priest, is to this effect, "Do you possess, and have you read, bad and forbidden books?" "But," he adds, "speaking generally, it appears that prohibitions, either at Rome or even from their own clergy, have, in modern France, a very limited and inconsiderable power ; not merely with those who reject and despise all religion, but with a very different class, who claim liberty to modify their opinions and practice regarding it, as their own judgment shall direct." "As the blood of living martyrs was found to be the seed of the church, so the condemning this written witness of primitive doctrine to the flame, or scattering its fragments to the winds, has often excited a new desire to be acquainted with what it testified. Thus, at the meeting of the Lausanne Bible Society, which I attended in July last, (1837) and where it appeared that a thousand copies more had been disposed of, than in the year preceding, the deputy from Neuchâtel mentioned a case where the priest of a village, having discovered, through the confessional, that Bibles were possessed, committed them to the fire ; on which some inhabitants naturally remarked, 'They must be bad books indeed, since the curé has burnt them ;' but on being told that these books contained the word of God, were very anxious to procure new copies ; curiosity, perhaps, prompting them to decide the point whether the book or the curé were really to be blamed. As a well-known French writer, professedly a [Roman] catholic, has said to persecutors, 'Remember the catacombs,' so one

would say to the destroyers of Scripture, 'Remember Diocletian.' There is also, sometimes, even among the least instructed, no want of shrewdness in appreciating actions, and guessing at motives. I inquired of a lame Savoyard youth, a beggar, who asked alms while we waited at the douane on the frontier, 'Why is it forbidden for the holy Scriptures to be given or sold in this country?' 'Because our priests do not choose that we should know or learn too much.'"

In the second place, let there ever be consistent adherence to the principles, the practices, and the spirit of primitive Christianity.

In the controversial writings of those who plead for the Roman catholic faith, there are two arguments perpetually recurring, which some protestants cannot read without a sigh, and others ought not to read without a blush. The first is an appeal to the characters of many professed adherents of the reformed religion; the second, an allegation of unscriptural customs retained in the reformed churches. Much exaggeration is employed in urging these topics; the manner in which they are turned against us is in many cases unfair; but still we must acknowledge that there is some truth in the representations. They say, there is among us great indifference to religion; that sabbaths are spent in dissipation by thousands of our countrymen; that churches are nearly empty, which, if full, would not contain half the population of the district in which they are situated; that religion is with many professed friends of reformed principles a useless name. Who among us can deny these facts? They say, there is little knowledge of the reasons of our faith among men who are bigoted to

the party ; that there is little devotion among some whose speculations constitute all their piety ; that there is little humility even among teachers of our doctrines, many of whom are manifestly proud and imperious ; and that the average degree of holiness in a protestant country is not so eminent as might be expected from our boasted superiority of principle. And who can but mourn the correctness of these allegations ! They are not likely to win us by such arguments to their church, indeed ; but these arguments have weight with casual observers. Travellers cannot see among us, when they visit our shores, such superiority of spirit and conduct as ought to be evinced by the adherents of a reformed, a spiritual system. They cannot find in the higher classes of society, the classes best informed on general topics, that predominant devotedness to God which would ratify the supposition that their separation from the church of Rome was the result of conviction, and a high degree of religious feeling. They cannot perceive in the populace, the decorum, the gentleness, the regular observance of sacred ordinances, which should point them out as adherents of the purest of churches, in opposition to the votaries of antichrist : and it is easy for the Romish formalist to impose upon the ignorant with appearances of devotion ; his time consumed in repeating useless pater-nosters and ave-marias may readily pass for time employed in communion with God, and excite the high admiration of the unthinking. It is incumbent, therefore, on every protestant to consider the tendency of his example, and to “ walk worthy of the high vocation with which he is called.” This is, indeed, necessary for his own sake ; he should do so from

just regard to his own spiritual and eternal welfare ; but it is also necessary for the credit of those holy, heavenly doctrines, which he professes. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Do not let it be thought, because you do not confess your sins to a priest, that you trifle with transgression. Do not let it be supposed, because you observe not so many ceremonies as they, that you live without private prayer, without family worship, or without regard to public ordinances. Live as Christians ; take the example of the apostles and primitive believers as your guide, and "aim by well-doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Take the Scripture, and the Scripture only, as your rule ; conform yourselves in doctrine and in practice to its dictates. What pleases your fancy, what accords with your taste, what imparts outward pomp and mere secular dignity to Christian worship, is not the legitimate object of your pursuit ; the subservience of scriptural directions to human improvements is the vivifying spirit of popery itself. The strength of protestants in the Romish controversy, lies in direct appeal to the gospels and apostolic epistles. Train your children to this, and they will be guarded against every jesuitical artifice ; and interpret the word of God according to its plain, unsophisticated meaning. Remember, it is a revelation from Him who is infinitely wise, with none of whose sayings it is safe to trifle. In no case venture to put an interpretation on his words which they will not spontaneously yield. Adduce no passage in support of any favourite doctrine which does not really appear to you to teach it. Reject with pious horror

that allegorizing system, which, under pretence of extracting a spiritual sense, amuses the fancy and bewilders the understanding, subverts the authority of the venerable record, and accustoms men to regard it as a book of riddles. Renounce "the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully ; but by manifestation of the truth commending yourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Roman catholics are accustomed to reproach us also with a want of consistency ; and, unless we would give them an advantage over us, it becomes us to cleanse ourselves carefully from every vestige of their corrupt system ; and if one shred cleaves to us, to cast it away as infectious. Dogmas, which seem at first sight to have little connexion with the rest, are yet found, when carefully examined, to be part and parcel of one profoundly ingenious and compact scheme. Take for example the doctrine of transubstantiation. It might seem to be a piece of innocent enthusiasm, induced by an overstrained interpretation of certain texts, but of small practical importance. But look at it more closely, and you will perceive that its influence is extensive and overwhelming. "The sacred character which the catholic priest possesses in the estimation of his flock," says Dr. Wiseman, "the power of blessing with which he seems invested, are but the results of that familiarity with which, in the holy mysteries, he is allowed to approach his Lord. The celibacy to which the clergy bind themselves is but a practical expression of that sentiment which the church entertains of the unvarying purity of conduct and thought wherewith the altar should be approached.

In this manner does the sacrament of the eucharist form the very soul and essence of all practical religion among catholics.* A writer, whom I have had occasion to quote more than once, has illustrated this idea yet more fully. "From the moment that people are made to believe that a man has the power of working, at all times, the stupendous miracle of converting bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, that man is raised to a dignity above all which kings are able to confer. What, then, must be the honour due to a bishop, who can bestow the power of performing the miracle of transubstantiation? What the rank of the pope, who is the head of the bishops themselves? The world beheld for centuries the natural consequences of the surprising belief in the power of priests to convert bread and wine into the incarnate Deity. Kings and emperors were forced to kiss the pope's foot, because their subjects were in the daily habit of kissing the hands of priests, those hands which were believed to come in frequent contact with the body of Christ. The abundance of ceremonies supposed to produce supernatural effects must magnify the character of the privileged ministers of those ceremonies. Hence, a church possessing seven sacraments is far superior in influence to one that acknowledges but two. Add to this, the nature of four out of the five Romanist sacraments; penance, extreme unction, ordination, and matrimony; and the extent of power which she thereby obtains will appear. Penance, *i. e.* auricular confession, puts the consciences of the laity under the

* Lectures, vol. ii. p. 239.

direction of the priesthood. Extreme unction is one of her means to allay fear and remorse. Ordination is intimately connected with the influence which the Roman church derives from transubstantiation; and its being made a sacrament adds probability to the miraculous powers which it is supposed to confer. Finally, by giving the sacramental character to matrimony, the source and bond of civil society is directly and primarily subjected to the church.”*

The want of unity among protestants is a favourite topic with the advocates of the Romish church; and true it is, that the importance of maintaining “the unity of spirit in the bond of peace” has been too often disregarded. Let us then not merely retort the accusation, though we may do so with the greater truth, but let us be careful while we stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and remember our individual responsibility to God, to cultivate that affectionate regard for our fellow-Christians, and readiness to co-operate with them in the work of Christ, which will show that we are of one heart and one soul, “one army of the living God,” though belonging to different regiments.

It has been well remarked, by a writer already quoted, that “when those protestant communities throughout the world, both great and small, which hold the same cardinal doctrines, shall exercise towards each other an unfeigned and practical amity, then will such a glorious proof ‘arise and shine’

* Blanco White’s Practical and Internal Evidence, p. 81.

for the real unity of Christ's church in all nations, as the compulsory uniformity of the papal system never could exhibit."*

In the third place, let there be fervent supplications to the Author of all good, that He would put forth his power to destroy that anti-christian system whose subversion we desire.

His agency alone can accomplish the design. If we knew that it would be withheld, we might well despair. The walls of Rome are high; men of great stature guard them; and if the Lord were not on our side, defeat would be inevitable.

Great dependence is placed by many on the enlightened spirit of the age, and the prevalence of general knowledge. It is impossible, they tell us, that the reign of superstition should be restored; men understand too thoroughly the delusive nature of the system, and love their liberty too well: and true it is, assuredly, that popery is more likely to gain ascendancy among the ignorant than among the well-informed; and that general knowledge is hostile to its conquests. But many who are learned in the wisdom of this world are deplorably ignorant of the things of God, and there are prejudices among those who pique themselves on their philosophy, as well as among the illiterate. Some of those prejudices tend strongly to incline them to the maxims of Rome. One strong prejudice existing among them is contemptuous disbelief of the abilities of the vulgar to judge for themselves the meaning of Scripture. Another prejudice among

* Sheppard's *Cursory Views of the State of Religion in France*, p. 137.

them is, the notion that diversity of religious opinions is an evil that it is desirable authority should restrain. A predominant feeling of dislike to investigate religious subjects themselves, inclines them to welcome a system which relieves them from the labour, and commits their consciences to professional guides; while antipathy to gospel truth, to holy separation from the world, and to zealous efforts for the conversion of others, disposes very many to join readily with any party that will repress their evangelical disturbers. So it is, however, whatever be the causes of it, that in the most polished capital of Europe, popery has been for some years past regaining its ascendancy. So it is, that the nobles of a neighbouring country who long breathed a protestant atmosphere, partook of protestant liberality, and mingled in protestant society, returned to their native land not less attached to popery than ever, nor less inclined to give it a bigoted support.

But though nothing less than the power of God affords a solid object for confidence, there is no reason to be dispirited. The power of God we are warranted to believe will be exerted. The rise of popery was foretold; so also is its downfall; and its downfall is ascribed in prophecy to Divine intervention. "The mystery of iniquity," said the apostle, "doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth; and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming," 2 Thess. ii. 7, 8. In what way its overthrow will be effected, it would be presumptuous in

us to attempt to determine. The highly figurative language of the book of Revelation affords but little insight into the details of futurity. The event must explain the vision; and then it will appear that all came to pass according to Divine foreknowledge. Some have thought that the vials of wrath, which must be poured out on the anti-christian world, are filled with temporal calamities, and will produce dreadful wars and desolations. Others say, may not the dissemination of the word of God be the thing designed? "He shall destroy it with the brightness of his coming:" and when does he come in greater splendour than when he comes in mercy, leading rebels captive in the chains of love? They hope that the errors, the wickedness, the abominations of popery may be consumed; that popery itself may languish, faint, and expire; not by violent hands, but by the prevalence of holy principles, of scriptural knowledge, and of Christian feelings. But in whatever way its overthrow may be effected, and this we must leave among the secrets of heavenly wisdom which in due season shall be revealed, the Lord shall consume it; its doom is certain; its death warrant is signed by the King of kings.

This, then, should stimulate us to pray for its destruction. What God has promised to do, we are authorised to ask. "Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." God of mercy, hasten, we entreat thee, this glorious consummation! Pity deluded myriads and break their fetters; attract their confidence and allegiance to thyself; let the

system fall and sink for ever like a millstone in the mighty waters. Rev. xviii. 21. Let the trumpet sound to announce that the mystery of God is completed; let piety, and peace, and love universally prevail; let the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and let him reign for ever!

Suggestions such as this lecture presents will not be satisfactory to some. Worldly men love to use worldly weapons, and think that nothing else can be effectual. But "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." It was not by force that Jesus Christ established his kingdom at first; nor is it by force that we should now strive to overcome his opponents. Other propositions might have been made with great propriety, but these cannot be gainsayed,—strenuous exertions to disseminate scriptural knowledge; consistent adherence to the principles, the practices, and the spirit of primitive Christianity; and fervent supplications to the Author of all good, that he would put forth his power to destroy that anti-christian system whose subversion we desire.

And now, "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified," Acts xx. 32. May you all be partakers of that salvation which is exhibited to our faith and hope in the apostolic writings. May you all appear at the tribunal of the unerring Judge among those whom he will recognise as the "called, and chosen, and faithful." And, whatever you may forget that has been urged on your attention, let me beseech you to remember that no form of Christianity can

avail without its spirit; that the only religion authorized by Christ is the religion taught in the sacred Scriptures; and that every blessing which we need may be obtained through faith in the Son of God.

FINIS.

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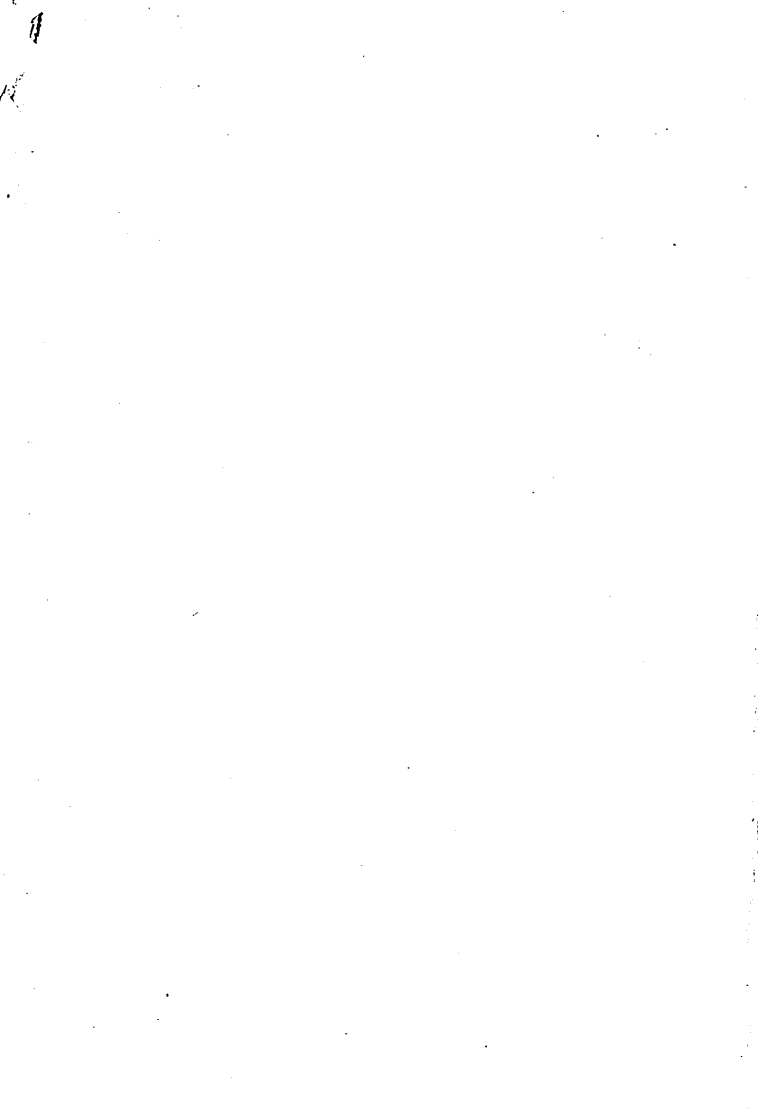
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